

THE CANADIAN ROCKIES  
NEW & OLD TRAILS



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A. P. COLEMAN

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# THE CANADIAN ROCKIES

NEW AND OLD TRAILS









THE SELKIRKS FROM ASULKAN PASS.

Frontispiece.



# THE CANADIAN ROCKIES

NEW AND OLD TRAILS

BY

A. P. COLEMAN, Ph.D., F.R.S.

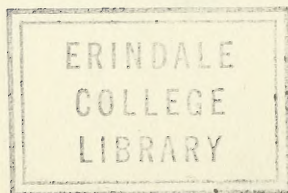
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WITH 3 MAPS AND 41 ILLUSTRATIONS

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*(By courtesy of the Royal Geographical Society Journal)*



# THE CANADIAN ROCKIES

## PART I

### *FIRST VISIT TO THE ROCKIES, 1884*

## CHAPTER I

### ON THE WAY TO THE ROCKIES

WHEN the train left Winnipeg for the West, about the middle of May, 1884, it was not in a hurry. It took its time at the stations so that you could pick spring flowers from the prairie, and eat a dinner of wild goose in a restaurant tent at one place, or enjoy a supper of antelope in a shack beside the station at another.

Twenty miles an hour meant a serious spurt, not to be undertaken everywhere, so that the motion and the scenery were not wildly exciting. The wheels sounded a monotonous beat on the ends of the rails, and the landscape was always the same—a sort of magic circle of prairie grass that seemed to travel with us. The sky was a very shallow dome, and shut down all round like a watch-glass over an insect.

One began to fancy that we were only marking

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time, the fallow grass and prickly cactus and pallid sage brush and purplish anemones around us now were so exactly like those an hour ago or a day ago. Even the animals did not change. The gopher, in khaki, beside his hole in the morning, was the counterpart of the gopher beside his hole in the evening. It seemed as if nothing ever could change. That the world should ever stand up on end, instead of flowing out endlessly east and west and north and south for the sleepy train to pound its way across, seemed incredible after three days of westward travel.

Toward evening of the third day, however, a faint jagged rim rose above the general level on the south-west, pale blue and delicate white against the yellow sky, with shapes clean cut and fine, and one's heart leaped, for there at last were the mountains.

The dome of sky already arched up a little more to give them room, and there were three dimensions of space instead of two. One began to look up again instead of down or straight ahead.

Then came Calgary, in its basin, beside Bow and Elbow Rivers, with blue-green mountain water instead of the muddy prairie fluid. Last year the old Calgary was east of the Elbow, but the almighty railway had put its station in a more spacious part of the valley, a mile or two west; and the submissive city packed itself on sleighs or carts, crossed the Elbow, and replanted itself near the station as a row of straggling log houses and tents. Some of the mansions had the curved roofs of



## On the Way to the Rockies

C.P.R. box cars, and the thousand inhabitants sheltered themselves from the weather in all possible ways, many under roofs of prairie sod.

The citizens were out in full force to see the semi-weekly train arrive: Blood Indians in bright blankets and with dark faces daubed with yellow or vermilion, cowboys in "shaps" and buckskin suits on lively broncos, spruce mounted policemen cantering up in scarlet jackets, and all sorts and conditions of ordinary men, with even a few well-dressed women, in addition to the squaws with blankets over their coarse black hair.

Just what the city lived on was not clear to the stranger—not on its past, for it had none. Perhaps on its future; but there were "knockers" who doubted if it had a future. Most of the inhabitants, however, were normal western men, "boosters," who did not see how the city could help prospering with the mines of the mountains, the cattle of the foot-hills, and the grain-fields of the prairies pouring in their tribute.

I called on an old acquaintance, a prominent lawyer, who received me in his office, a ten-by-twelve tent with a bed screened off in the rear, and introduced me to eminent citizens, from whom I obtained much valuable information of an optimistic kind.

Writing now, twenty-eight years later, it must be admitted that the "boosters" were right, for Calgary has become a solid and prosperous city of fifty thousand people.

But my real interest was the mountains. I could

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talk of nothing else, and climbed the bench above the valley to scan them in the distance, while the Calgarians preferred to talk of steers and broncos in their sheltered plain by the rivers, out of sight of the great range of mountains. Their lack of enthusiasm was as suggestive as that of the explorer Mackenzie, who, first of white men, in 1793, beheld them on his journey to the Pacific. "At two in the afternoon the Rocky Mountains appeared in sight, with their summits covered with snow, bearing south-west by south ; they formed a very agreeable object to every person in the canoe." Mackenzie wastes no more adjectives on them, but goes on to describe the buffaloes on the bank of the river—the steers of those days.

I hastened to leave Calgary by the next train, three days later, that wriggled its way up Bow Valley through the darkness, over a half-ballasted track, crossing the river on spindle-legged trestle bridges, and halting with a jolt at Morley on the Stony Indian Reserve, where my brother, the rancher, was to meet me.

It was two o'clock in the morning, and swelling black hills crested with black trees stood round us, cutting off part of a blue-black sky. The air was chill as my baggage was loaded on a creaking Red River cart built all of wood, and we turned down winding "coulees" and over a silent, dewy plain to Bow River. A clumsy boat was unchained and pushed off, the snorting pony swimming behind. There was a rush and swirl of strong, mysterious waters, against which the oarsmen

## On the Way to the Rockies

pulled heavily, and then the bow grated on a half-seen shore.

We leaped out and fastened the boat. The pony scrambled splashing up the beach, and was harnessed, dripping, to a buckboard; and presently we rattled over stony plains toward the ranch as the earliest dawn began to break. The cool valley, four thousand feet above the sea, the upsweep of tawny hill-slopes, and the grey mountains sharply outlined against the south-west sky, had something austere and impressive about them as wide, untenanted spaces.

A freight train crawling up the pass on the other side of the river was a procession of ants; the scattered log houses were only dots on the broad hillsides, and the ghostly cones of Indian teepees seemed lifeless. Man and his works showed for very little in a gigantic valley, where the grim mountains pushed the dusky blue sky so far above them.

Perhaps it was only the human lack of courage at three o'clock in the morning that daunted me as we drove through a silent, impassive world, seeming too huge and unconquered for mortal man to feel at home in; but I was thankful when the sunrise spread warm tints in the greys, and the soft low of cattle came from the hills, and a vesper sparrow began to sing, just as his fellows do in the east.

The mountains had covered their austerity with the most delicate and feminine of gauzy garments, and all the world was rosy and warm with level

## The Canadian Rockies

sunshine when we reached the log house of the ranch—low, sod-roofed, and without a tree to shelter it on the wide hillside. It and the other low log buildings and the log corral crouched with a proper humility on the broadly sculptured foot-hill sweeping up to a crest of rock.

How I learned the humbling lessons of the tenderfoot, who knows not the wiles of the bronco nor the arts of the cowboy need not be related here, nor need I do more than recall the homage given to the mountains, fifteen miles away. They were bold and bare to indecency in the hard mid-day sun, so that every harsh seam and scar or band of slate or limestone stood out as if just across the river—brown, earthy, almost repulsive.

But in the afternoon blue and purple shadows began to creep from point to point, till all was soft and ethereal as if fifty miles remote ; and the sunset can hardly be described in sober words, with its mingling of delicately rich, mysterious tones, deepening and glowing, and then going out, so that nothing but sharp-edged embers stood against a colourless sky.

Going to the west window one morning to take my first look at the mountains, I was shocked to find them gone. They had vanished overnight like a dream. The great valley was still there, wider and longer-looking and quite complete, as if the mountains had never existed. The mists had swallowed them up, while the plains basked as usual in desert sunshine.

Then the foot-hills came to their own. Huge



## On the Way to the Rockies

masses of bent and tilted shale and sandstones, occasionally showing a black seam of coal, they often reached five thousand feet above the sea and one thousand feet above the valley, and in most other places would have been reckoned respectable mountains. But now the mists rose and parted, and were dissolved under the morning sun. The pageant of the Rockies began to solidify and take shape once more, and the foot-hills became foot-hills again, when the real mountains occupied the stage.

Meantime my plans were completed. Ponies, more or less truculent, were selected from a squealing mob in a corral, and paid for in cash to their shrewd Scotch half-breed owner; Grier, an old prospector, was secured as companion; and Severin, a strapping young French Canadian, was engaged as cook and camp-keeper. They were to follow with the ponies.

Fording Bow River, greatly fallen since my arrival, I waited at the little Morley Station for the leisurely train to saunter up from Calgary, forty miles east, watching the silent Mountain Stonies as they sat their ponies like statues to see the fire-wagons of the white men come in, for trains were still a novelty to them.

The long-awaited-for train arrived and departed, and the mountains visibly lifted themselves into the sky as we rattled westwards past Kananaskis Falls, past higher foot-hills, and through the portal of the "Gap," where two bare, grey sentinels rose sharply three or four thousand feet above the Bow.

The mountains were about me. I had seen the

## The Canadian Rockies

Alps and the Jotunfjeld. How would the Canadian mountains compare with them?

The construction train, staggering along on no fixed schedule, gave plenty of time to look about before it stopped, for the last time, at "the End," near what is now the delightful tourist resort Laggan.

Whoever would advance beyond this must do so on foot or on horseback. It was evening, and my eyes turned from the mountains across the valley of Bow River to the "city," temporary and hideous, where night quarters must be found. The chief hotel seemed to be the "Sumit" House (Summit?), a low-browed log building with a floor of "puncheons"—slabs split with the axe—instead of boards.

When darkness fell I paid for my bed in advance, according to the cautious practice of the hostelry, and retired to the grey blankets of bunk No. 2, second tier, in the common guest-chamber, trying to shut out sights and sounds from the bar-room by turning my back. An hour or two later another man scrambled into the bunk, somewhat the worse for whisky, and tucked himself into the blankets beside me. It appeared that my half-dollar paid for only half the bed.

It was a relief to turn out before the sun and escape from the noisome air of the hotel into the stumps and half-burnt logs and general litter of the clearing outside, where one could take deep breaths of the keen morning breeze, fresh from the snow of the mountains.

## On the Way to the Rockies

The crude life of the city was not yet stirring, and the dusky peaks on each side dominated the pass, looking down coldly, perhaps scornfully, on the heaps of foulness and scars of fire that marred the beauty of the valley. Then the spell was broken, sunlight gleamed on the western peaks, smoke began to rise from camp fires and chimneys ; there were voices and oaths, mules hee-hawed in the corral near by, and the valley once more yielded itself up to man's uses.

When some business was done and arrangements had been made for the night somewhere else than at the Summit House, the next thought was, of course, to climb the nearest mountain, for mountains can only be seen from a mountain. You cannot really see them from the valley, even a high valley like this, at five thousand feet.

A Scotch engineer, waiting for a position on the railway, joined me, and we set out gaily for an afternoon's frolic.

The mountain nearest was to the east, and first we had to cross a swath of burnt woods—an abomination of desolation made up of black soil, black standing trunks, and black fallen logs—under a glowing sun, that tried our temper. Then came green timber and shade, with moss under foot, and a green-edged lake, followed by a stiff climb among dwindling spruces until timber-line was reached, where my Scotch friend halted with a kindling eye. We were walking on heather five thousand miles from the Scottish moorlands, the first he had seen for years. I had not known before that

## The Canadian Rockies

heather grew in Canada, so that it was an equal surprise to me.

There were three kinds, with red, or yellowish, or pure white blossoms, the last small bells almost as dainty as lily-of-the-valley ; and broad spaces between the rocks were carpeted with them.

Above the trees there was a lavish display of bright flowers, and the engineer elected to stay there while I went on over rocks and a snowfield to the top.

It was only a commonplace mountain, about eight thousand feet high, without a name, so far as I am aware ; but it belonged to the family of Rocky Mountains, and gave one an introduction to its stately neighbours, for here one could gaze up and down the pass with nothing but clean air between one and the summits, while down in the valley a trail of smoke from the "right of way" where the timber was burning blurred and sullied the view.

From the top I could see that the small snowfield I had crossed projected to the east as a cornice over a fascinatingly desolate little valley, all grey cliffs and talus blocks, with a fierce little torrent grey with mud raving at the bottom. Northward, up Bow River, one could see a blue lake at its source ; and across the main valley, with its smoke and bustle, rose several fine mountains with glaciers, and at the foot of one of them beautiful Lake Louise.

Mount Temple and Mount Lefroy, as I learned afterwards, reach 11,600 and 11,400 feet, and





BOW LAKE AND THE SUMMIT OF BOW PASS.



## On the Way to the Rockies

are among the highest in sight along the railway.

After years of humdrum city life in the east, the assembly of mountains, lifting their heads serenely among the drifting clouds, gave one a poignant feeling of the difference between man's world and God's. Here was purity and dignity and measureless peace. Here one might think high thoughts. Below in the grim valley engines puffed, mule-teams strained at their loads, sweaty men delved in the muck, and man's work, looked at from above, did not seem admirable under its mantle of smoke.

But that was an unfair thought. How should I have reached the mountains if there had been no railway?

That night, by the kind word of a high official, I had permission to join the railway contractors in their boarding-car, a shrewd and interesting set of men from everywhere—the logging camp, Old World Universities, the east, and the west. There were pious men from Scotland, impious ones from Montana, much-married ones from Utah, and prudish men from Ontario, chatting or sitting silent, all waiting for a signal. There was a clangour from a big tent near by; a brawny "cookee," with sleeves rolled up, vindictively hammered a crowbar bent into a triangle and hung in a tree; and each man moved toward the tent, for it was supper-time. The meals were rough but good, in so far as things can be good which come from a tin can. The advance of civilisation is marked

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by mounds of empty cans, and our age may some day be named the Age of Tin.

Later, after a look at the mountains, while the moon rose cautiously, and at last gleamed softly on a snowfield, I tried the new sleeping quarters in the box car, with the bunk-room up a little flight of stairs. A dim lamp showed two tiers of bunks already half filled with forms muffled in blankets. Soon I was joined to their number, and but for its unstable equilibrium, voted the boarding-car an immense improvement on the hotel. It was, unhappily, a sort of reversed pendulum on springs, that rocked for fully a minute when any late comer got on board; and we all shuddered in sympathy when any one turned over in his bunk.

Next day I visited Lake Louise and scrambled along its shores, then unnamed and without marks of human habitation where the comfortable chalet now rises. On the following day Grier and Severin, with four of the ponies, arrived, and all arrangements were made to cross the pass into British Columbia.

## CHAPTER II

### TO THE COLUMBIA RIVER

THE journey down the wild Kicking Horse Valley is familiar to travellers across the mountains by rail. During the summer of 1884 the valley was full of smoke from the inevitable forest fires, and everywhere men were at work, teaming, with much bad language, on the inexpressible "tote road," using pick and shovel on earthwork, or drilling and blasting in rock cuts, so that more than once the flying bits of stone fell about us. We looked up awestruck at the cliffs of Mount Stephen, and at length reached the end even of the "tote road." Beyond this our way led up and down the mountain-sides, following the pack trail, and as a tenderfoot I had much to learn of British Columbian trails and ponies. Fortunately Grier was an old prospector, and Severin was a hardy backwoodsman, so that not much of the work fell to my share.

Brown's pack-train was just ahead on the side hill, three hundred feet above the Kicking Horse; and I was riding comfortably along on Buckskin, who seemed to handle his feet deftly and with no sense of risk on the foot-wide trail, when a pony



## The Canadian Rockies

a few yards in advance jostled his wide pack against a wall of rock, lost his balance, and rolled a hundred feet down the slope, halting upside down against a tree. After the pack had been taken off, the pony was led trembling up and re-packed.

I now got off at the worst points. Reaching another bad place, Brown and his packer took the stumbling pony by the halter and tail and edged him round the difficulty.

A mile beyond this, where the trail was about one thousand feet above the torrent, another horse rolled over, and I fully expected that he would go on to the river; but he, too, brought up against a tree, and by dint of hard tugging horse and load were once more brought up to the trail. I now decided that walking was far better exercise than riding, and cautiously led Buckskin along the groove in the cliff which was all that stood between us and the river.

We were entering the broad valley of the Upper Columbia, in a forest of mighty firs and cedars, with tall, white-stemmed aspens on the drier flats along the river. We had passed from chill early spring, at five thousand feet, near Laggan, to hot summer, at half the elevation, near Golden, where the Kicking Horse enters the Columbia.

In my inexperience, there had seemed trouble enough with the ponies in the narrow Kicking Horse valley, but at Golden our real difficulties began. The ponies had been picked up at different points and lacked solidarity—in fact, only the two bought at Calgary were friends. When we came

## To the Columbia River

down the steep side of the terrace or "bench" to the flat near the river where the shacks and tents of ambitious Golden were beginning to rise, Grier had hobbled two of them, hoping they would see the inadvisability of attempting the two hundred feet of steep climb to the bench.

The tent was not yet pitched, however, before we saw old Bay cheerfully going up the slope, hobbles and all, with the others following. Grier foreboded mischief, but they were out of sight before any one could capture them.

There were miles of burnt and unburnt timber, mixed with grassy glades sloping up between the edge of the bench and the mountain; and it was the third day before we had all the ponies together again. We got the two cronies the first day, but could not find the others. By the time the next two were captured, at points miles away, the first pair had disappeared again. The grass at the village had all been eaten, and one could not blame the animals for going farther afield.

Horse-hunting through square miles of river bottom, dusty bench, and bushy hillside, under a broiling sun, busied us for two whole days. It was no use trying to track the horses, for there were a hundred other animals wandering over the range; but it was discouraging to tramp half a mile toward a bay horse on the hillside only to find it was some one else's bay, or to catch glimpses of a buckskin through the bushes and discover a mass of yellowish clay on some upturned root when the place was reached, or to see something that might

## The Canadian Rockies

be the black pony which turned to a burnt stump on nearer inspection.

It was some consolation to know that others were in the same plight. There was a noise in the bushes, and a hot young man, with a halter in his hand, came up, asking anxiously if I had seen a blue pony with a star on its face, or a bay with saddle marks. I could not recall such animals, and he went on.

At length, on the third day, we had all the ponies assembled at one time, and, to make sure of a start in the morning, handed them over to a firm of "horsewranglers"—two half-breeds who engaged to produce the animals when needed on payment of fifty cents per horse.

That night, after watching a pretty little Shuswap squaw, with a papoose on her back, milk a gentle-faced cow in a brush enclosure near our tent, we went to bed with peace of mind.

Early next morning the ponies were driven into the Kicking Horse, and, after one or two false starts, swam across the broad and turbulent river modestly called by our neighbours "the creek"; and we followed with our saddles and stuff in a canoe. Our trail up the Columbia valley began through groves of tall spruce or poplar, but presently came out upon the stony beds of dry torrents, or along the edge of grassy benches, from which we could look down on the river and across to the Selkirks.

At night camp was pitched fifteen miles up near a "ranch," just built of logs, and now being roofed

## To the Columbia River

with earth by a Chinaman. The only neighbours beside the man and woman of the ranch were this Chinaman and his partner, in a little tent a hundred yards off.

Here we found ourselves lacking some needful things, and Severin, our good-natured French Canadian camp cook, was sent back for them on the black pony to the end of the railway, while Grier and I began work on the nearer slopes of the Beaverfoot mountains.

The Columbia Valley between the Rockies and the Selkirks has a character of its own. A mile deep and six or eight miles wide, it appears to the eye to go on for ever toward the north-west and the south-east, the enclosing mountains growing bluer and hazier till lost in distant mists. After a slope of forest, largely burnt, the wall of the Rockies rises toward the north-east as grey cliffs of limestone and gentler slopes of slate, monotonous and by no means beautiful.

Across the river to the south-west, and some miles farther away, the Selkirks lift themselves to eight thousand feet or more, with blackish ever-green timber along the valley, now partly burnt and growing up afresh, followed by paler green and brown slopes, and ending with purplish cliffs of quartzite at the summit. There were few snow-fields and no large glaciers in sight, since the lower frontal ranges hide the loftier snow-covered peaks of both Rockies and Selkirks.

Through the middle of the valley winds the muddy green Columbia, with lovely lagoons of



## The Canadian Rockies

clear bluish water on the concave sides of its bends. Though only seventy miles from its head, it is already a great river, broad and with a steady sweep of current. The valley has its own peculiar climate, with only two winds—a cool one from the north-west and a warm one from the south-east. It might be breathless in the sun to-day, but to-morrow a frigid air would sweep down from the north-west, bringing masses of cloud completely roofing in the valley half-way up the mountain-sides. A thunderstorm, with blue-black clouds and endless reverberations from mountain to mountain, might end in a grey veil of rain, shutting out the world, or might roll itself upwards in pillars of sunlighted vapour, climbing the mountains to melt in the clear heavens.

We were on the high-road from Montana to the new railway line, and often had other visitors than the rather sinister man and woman of the ranch, who had no cattle and made no sign of cultivating the soil. Disgusted railway workers, with their small “turkeys” slung on their back, passed us, beginning the three hundred miles tramp over rough trails to the land of freedom in Montana; and eager fellows, tired of prospecting and finding nothing, were pushing hopefully north to make some money on the grade. Four fine-looking Montana traders came in with their mules one evening, piling the loads of flour and bacon under tarpaulins, and offering supplies for much less than they could be bought for in the log stores of Golden.







ONE OF THE SELKIRKS FROM ACROSS THE COLUMBIA.

## To the Columbia River

Next morning the white bell-mare moved northwards, and after her, in proper order, came the mules according to their rank, with what was unsold of their loads.

One night, at dusk, a wild party of desperadoes and Indians cantered in from nowhere, with a little keg fastened to each side of the pack-saddles; and the significance of the ranch became evident. It was a "whisky ranch," purposely planted outside the mounted police limit of ten miles on each side of the "right of way." We began to esteem our Chinese neighbours, whip-sawing lumber and floating it down to Golden, as respectable citizens compared with the white ranchers.

After exploring two barren valleys in the Beaver-foot range, I longed to make close acquaintance with the unnamed mountain across the Columbia, with its cirque and small snowfields. On Sunday morning, to my surprise, I saw one of the patches of snow move diagonally up the mountain. Running into the tent for the glass, the patch resolved itself into a flock of mountain goats, five miles away.

We cut dry cedar logs and put together a raft, and only waited for Severin to come back from "the End" to make our venture into the new world of the Selkirks. The long avalanche tracks of paler green, stretching thousands of feet down through the sombre forests of spruce and pine, looked like narrow grassy paths to the gardens of the gods above; and Grier and I selected one for our ascent, getting a compass bearing for use through the unbroken timber beneath.

## The Canadian Rockies

Severin came, several days later than had been expected, with tales of fathomless tote roads and all sorts of delays owing to rain and rivers ; and the next morning our raft was paddled across the clear and placid lagoon, breaking marvellous reflections of trees and mountains into a mosaic of colour patches. The narrow ribbon of tree-crowned bank between the lagoon and the river was not hard to cross at a low point, since the water was high ; and then we were on the muddy current, paddling our best, but hastening down-stream toward Golden.

At last, reaching the western shore of the river, the raft was securely tied to a tree, and we set out through the cedars by compass, presently reaching the creek valley we had planned to follow for a time. Here I had my first encounter with that torment of the moister forests, the devil's club—slender, withy, and graceful, but the most diabolical plant in America, lurking among the ferns to fill one's hands with poisonous needles.

We advanced steadily through the lower woods, treading down the tall maidenhair ferns and seeing nothing of the world for the trunks of the trees. While we were sitting at lunch beside our fire a humming-bird poised itself a few feet away, then took courage and settled on its dainty nest, so covered with lichen as to look like a knot on the branch where it rested.

Evening found us still among the tapering cedars, with no evidence of an outer world ; and from our beds we could look up at the graceful

## To the Columbia River

trees, swaying and bowing to one another in a solemn dance to soft music.

The next morning brought us nearly to timber-line, with open groves of stunted trees, now chiefly spruce, so that we had glimpses of the distance. We lunched by a waterfall at the first snow, and afterwards followed up the stream to the romantic cirque or half-kettle valley at its head, where we camped under a clump of spruces. We were at timber-line, and after the gloom of the forest below, where the eye beheld nothing but sombre green boughs and grey tree-trunks, it was entrancing to come out on flowery slopes with the wide world open to us. And how bewitching the high mountain flowers are! On June 30th spring beauties—adder's tongues, yellow columbines, and a host of others of all colours of the rainbow—were wide open to the Eastern sun, and the day was one to rave over.

Climbing to the top of our nameless mountain, more than one thousand feet above the last timber, and about eight thousand five hundred feet above the sea, we crossed, first meadows and tinkling streams, with a pond or two, then rose upon steeper slopes of bare slate or of moss or Alpine flowers scarcely in bloom, and finally climbed tilted beds of brown or reddish quartzite, whose edges we followed to the top.

Before us opened out the valley of the Spili-macheen, flowing southward to meet the Columbia in the far distance. On the other side was a cliff, and beneath it the stiff slope we had climbed;



## The Canadian Rockies

and miles away, and at least a mile below us, the Columbia wriggled on its course north-west, for the two rivers flow in opposite directions.

Beyond was the tremendous landscape of the Rockies, snowy and glorious, with hundreds of peaks, of which at that time hardly a dozen had been climbed or named. A particularly fine group to the east probably included Mount Assiniboine, the Matterhorn of the Rockies.

To the west rose two ranges of the Selkirks, the more distant one glacier-covered.

Next morning, however, all the glamour was gone under shrouded skies; but we climbed another peak on the ridge, in spite of the gloomy weather. Clouds clung to the mountain-tops, and when they lifted there was the glimmer of fresh snow. Soon snow was falling round us, and we took shelter behind gnarled, weather-beaten, ever-green bushes leaning against the cliffs. The snow thickened, and at last we slipped and slid down the slopes to our camp under the spruces, where we took a hasty meal and pushed rapidly downwards through the forest, hoping to reach the river before dark.

We were tired, and made poor time among the wet bushes, so that night caught us still toiling through the cedars. There was nothing to do but camp in that rainy wilderness without shelter, for the spiry British Columbia cedar sheds no rain. It was a wild and dismal night, rain driving, trees roaring and swaying in the storm, and no dry place to spread the blankets. We wrapped ourselves in

## To the Columbia River

them and sat with our back to a huge tree, keeping a strong fire burning in front, dozing and waking, and heartily glad when the wan morning allowed us to cover the last mile or two to the river, where the raft was swinging in water higher than ever. In half an hour we were on the other shore, after drifting away below our tent because of the current.

The Selkirks were fascinating, and we made another incursion on foot, taking along Severin, a powerful young fellow, to help with the loads. The second visit differed little from the first, except in our experience with a snow-slide path.

We had missed the mark on the former journey, struggling all the way to timber-line through the forest, and regretted the smooth, green path we had promised ourselves. More fortunate the second time, after three or four slow miles through the tangled undergrowth among the heavy timber, sky began to show in front, and we came joyfully to the end of the trees where the path was to begin. But what a path !

Tree trunks, two or three feet through, were smashed down together as one might spill a box of matches, criss-crossed and piled upon one another fifty feet high—old, weather-beaten trunks, bare and white like bones ; others, of last winter, still partly covered with bark. A squirrel ran over the logs and jeered at us. It was no road for us.

Laboriously we made our way to one side through the standing timber and passed this final *débâcle* of the trees, hoping for better things farther up, where the ground might have been swept bare.

## The Canadian Rockies

After a quarter of a mile we entered the clearing again, finding it covered with a close fur of bushes, with all their branches pointing downwards, so that logs and loose rocks were completely hidden. Here at least there were endless blueberries, a feast for birds and bears and men ; but as a path it was a failure.

One especial bush, the box-elder, had limber branches twelve feet long, layer after layer, each bush tangled with its neighbour. If you stepped on the mat of branches, it sank unequally under your foot to rocky depths ; to pull them apart was almost impossible. To go up against the stream meant dragging yourself bodily with the hands. To cross the stream with packs like ours meant rolling over and under withy stems that gave no support, the under ones snatching at the feet and the upper ones at the pack on one's back. To cross one of these baffling streams of bushes, flattened by the down-rushing winter's snow, cost a hard hour's work, though it was only a quarter of a mile wide.

Henceforth we avoided snow-slides in the Selkirks, though in the Rockies, where the growth is less dense, parts of the slides often make fairly good walking.

## CHAPTER III

### UP THE SPILLIMACHEEN

THE whisky ranch was growing to be a nuisance, a noisy and riotous neighbour at night ; and we struck camp, moving some miles up the valley to Johnson's ranch, where we ferried over the Columbia, first splashing for a mile through a shallow lagoon, then canoeing across the river after starting the ponies into the water to swim. Grier had acquired a bay mare with a lively foal, and was somewhat worried lest the youngster should be swept down and lost. However, the colt held his head up and swam as well as any of the horses, while his mother scarcely kept her nose above water and drifted nearly a mile down before landing.

We now crossed the ridge that separates the Spillimacheen from the Columbia, and then turned north-west up the valley. Rains had soaked us now and then on our foot expeditions, but here in the actual Selkirks they seemed endless. The tent was scarcely down and the packs on the horses before showers began, softening the swampy trail and making life miserable in every way. Camping at night in pouring rain, on water-soaked moss

## The Canadian Rockies

near some muskeg opening in the forest, where there was swamp grass for the horses, was a distinct trial of temper and endurance.

Near the head of the valley we made a central camp beside the river, now reduced to a creek, and put a bridge across by felling two trees side by side. This gave a chance to climb the second range of the Selkirks, rising as a long ridge to eight or nine thousand feet.

From the top the central range was before us to the south-west, beyond the valley of Beaver Creek. A few miles away stretched one of the snowiest regions in British Columbia, and we could count nearly fifty glaciers, most of them small, but several having a *névé* five miles or more in width.

On the way down, turning a sharp corner of rock, we came upon a goat and kid resting near a patch of snow in the shade of the cliff. Apparently the sun was too warm for them. They rose quietly thirty or forty feet away, looked at us as we stood motionless, and then trotted off across the snow.

We now shifted our main camp to timber-line on the range between the Spillimacheen and Fifteen Mile Creek, so that we were nearly opposite the whisky ranch and only six or eight miles from it, after circling forty miles to reach the position.

Our tent was pitched in a sheltered ravine close to the last trees, a snow bank above sending down a little stream as a water supply, which, however, was generally frozen up in the morning. The slopes of crumbling slate above tree-line were



## Up the Spillimacheen

covered with a short turf, mostly of a little sedge having black tufts of flowers, that suited the ponies perfectly ; and we could keep an eye on them as they ranged for a mile or more on one side or the other.

From camp we could easily climb in half an hour to the ridge separating the two valleys, and get the overwhelming view of the Rockies which had entranced me on our first climb in the Selkirks.

Going up on Sunday to enjoy the outlook, a curious sensation awaited me. All was quiet in our valley under a sunny sky, with some white clouds moving rapidly above. It was the proper Sunday calm. Lifting my head above the final ridge of rock, a strong wind coming from space laid hands on me and thrust me back. This powerful, invisible current, sweeping across the continent 8,500 feet above the sea, leaving the stagnant air of the valleys untouched, seemed to typify the vast, mysterious forces influencing the world beyond the touch of our senses.

The view from the ridge was glorious, but almost indescribable. Far to the south-east, at the end of the valley, throned in purple state, was a range of snow-covered mountains, rising into gauzy blue and white. Next came a succession of blue and purple peaks, each with stronger colours and firmer outlines than the last, till the strong, warm tints of ochrey rocks in the ridge beside me lifted themselves against the soft blue of the distance. The gradation was perfect. The other side of the ridge dropped off as cliffs, but on our side was the

## The Canadian Rockies

smiling slope of steep meadow, with many blossoms, even on the 1st of August, where the snow had lain recently; below this were the crabbed spruces, and still lower the forest, growing taller as it marched down the valley, where grey cedars were mingled with the dark spruces. The ribbon of river and an exquisite lake or two marked the bottom of the valley.

From this camp one could command most of the mountains and valleys around—splendid Bear Gulch on the western side, Fifteen Mile and Canyon Creeks on the other—and could study the bent and tilted slates and quartzites. But my time was nearly up, and on the 6th of August, after a furious squall that threatened to bring down our tent in the night, we packed our ponies, urged them up the steep slope to the divide between the Spillimacheen and Fifteen Mile, forced them one after another to slide on their haunches down the slippery talus of slate on the Columbia side, and presently reached smoother ground at the first trees. A sudden storm drove us to camp here in the *cirque*, not far from a bridal-veil waterfall trailing over grey rocks, with a border of bright green mosses in the lower part.

The next day saw us crossing the Columbia in a canoe, and a few days later we were camped near the mouth of the Kicking Horse, on the way home. Here I had an unexpected visit from Professor Blake, of University College, Nottingham, who had come to Canada for the meeting of the British Association, and had wandered to this out-

## Up the Spillimacheen

of-the-way place by train and pony, seeking metamorphic rocks. Unfortunately, all the rocks of that kind are on the west flank of the Selkirks, so that he had to return unsatisfied.

Some of his eastern Canadian friends had inspired him with great dread of grizzlies, which are really harmless when not attacked ; and others, in Ottawa, had advised the bringing of a folding bedstead for comfort in sleeping. The bedstead duly accompanied him to the end of the track, but beyond this he was obliged to travel by cayuse and could not transport the bedstead where it was needed. He must have suffered on the board or earth floors of the camps on the way down the Kicking Horse valley, and have longed for the comfortable bed stacked up with a thousand other things at the end.

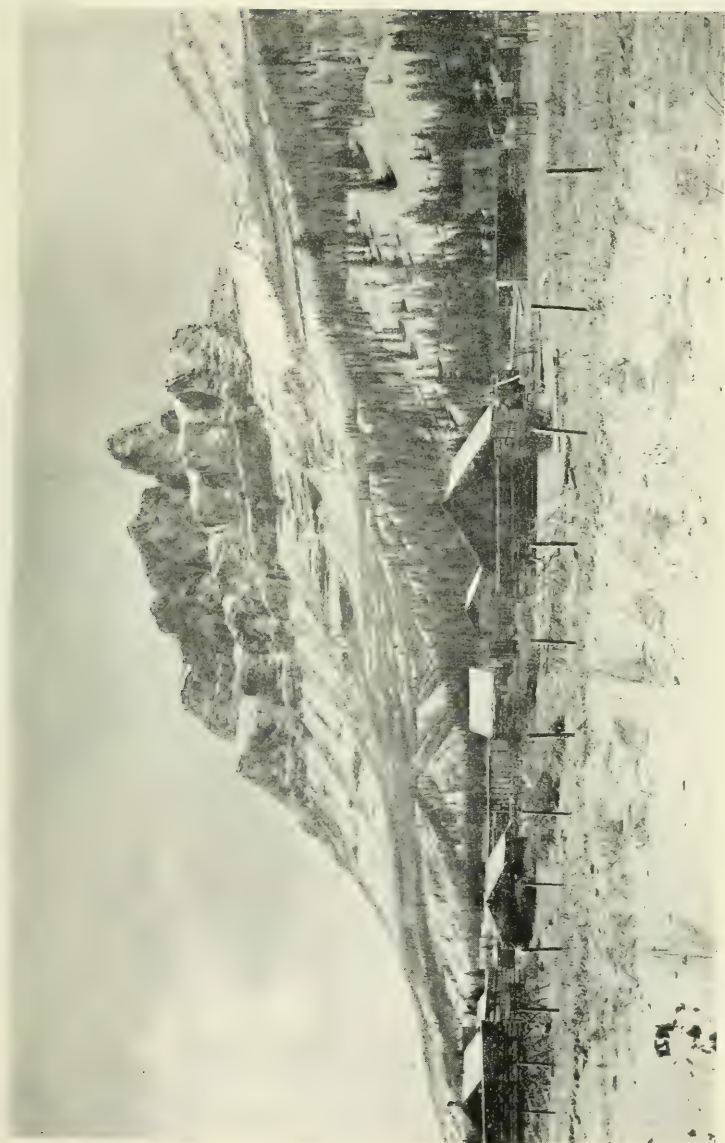
The end had come a long way to meet us when we returned toward the pass. There we sold the horses and pack-saddles for more than we had paid in the beginning. The beasts had looked after their own fodder, as the cayuse cheerfully does in the mountains, so that from the monetary point of view the transport had cost less than nothing. They had cost us enough worry and ill-temper to quite balance the account in other ways, however.

## CHAPTER IV

### CASTLE MOUNTAIN

GRIER and I had promised a prospector to stop at Silver City, between Laggan and Banff, to visit a copper mine, and dropped off there on our way east. During the winter the log houses of Silver City near the foot of Castle Mountain had been crowded with hundreds of mining men and prospectors from Montana, waiting, not very patiently, to stake silver claims in the spring. They proposed to make Silver City a "wide-open" town after the fashion of Montana; but two red-coated policemen came in quietly one day to reside for the winter, and after their arrival, I was told, the city was as orderly as a Sunday School, so that no "guns" were used in its streets. When the snows melted the hopes of the miners melted too, for it was found that there was no silver in the ore and none too much copper, so that the city was almost deserted before the end of summer.

Mose and his partner, a Welshman, were among the few still buoyed up by hope; but they were curiously suspicious of their neighbours, and we started off for the claims in two different directions to throw watchers off the scent.



CASTLE MOUNT.





## Castle Mountain

After sweeping a curve through the woods, we met the other party leading a pony with blankets and supplies at the appointed rendezvous, and two hours later reached the camp, under a spreading tree in the beautiful Horseshoe Valley behind the Castle.

Our first day was spent mostly near the head of the valley, scrambling up "chimneys" in the vertical upper cliffs of rotten limestone, where Mose had found small veins of copper glance.

Some of the climbing was quite risky work, since the projecting knobs of rock were often loose, and gave way under the hand or foot. Above the edge of the cliff, however, going was easy, so that the highest part of the Castle (nine thousand feet) was not hard to reach, and the wonderful view of the valley of Bow River, four thousand feet below, was quite worth seeing. The tower standing in front of the Castle to the south-east looked as unscalable as it was reported to be.

Our work was finished early in the afternoon and there was time to ponder over the valley five or six miles wide and three-quarters of a mile deep. The Castle is built of nearly flat-lying courses of limestone, and cliffs built in the same way rise across the valley, evidently a continuation of the same beds.

What had caused the great gap between? The pale blue ribbon of river at the bottom of the valley looked innocent and quite insignificant compared with the immense and solidly built Castle and its neighbours; and yet there is little doubt that

## The Canadian Rockies

the Bow and its tributaries, helped by the weather and frost and glaciers, have actually destroyed and swept away to build up the plains the many cubic miles of rock that once joined the two mountains. It was a beautiful study of erosion.

We turned back to camp by an easy path beside two delightful lakes, and soon passed out of the warm evening sunshine into the cool shadow of the mountain which seemed to overhang our camp and cut off a great arc of the sky.

Next morning was dull, but we set off early to cross the ridge between Horseshoe Valley and Johnson Creek, where our prospectors had other claims, following the fresh tracks of mountain sheep and seeing three of them silhouetted against the sky on a ridge half a mile off. The big-horn has, of course, long ago disappeared from Bow Pass, and is now seldom found in the Southern Rockies.

From the ridge parallel to the Castle, Johnson Valley opened beneath us two thousand feet below as a beautiful sweep of natural park with lakes, groves, and meadows, through which the sea-green creek made its way toward Bow River. On the ridge we came upon a covey of ptarmigan of the usual innocent tameness, which was rewarded by a volley of stones knocking over two of them.

The descent into the valley down loose rocks in a gorge was distinctly dangerous with a party as reckless as ours, and one of the men behind me sent a block or two whizzing past so that I was glad to turn aside under a projecting rock.

It had begun to rain, making the rocks slippery

## Castle Mountain

as well as insecure ; and we waited only a minute to see Mose's copper vein before going on down over better slopes to the upper end of the valley where he had a second camp.

The trees here were tamarack, giving little shelter from the rain, but we intended to spread a blanket as a roof, which, with a fire in front, would make us comfortable. Mose's provisions and blankets had been rolled up and cached under a rock on his last visit to the valley, and he proceeded to pull them out of their hiding-place, but found the blankets gnawed to tatters and the flour scattered over the ground. He used some strong language in denouncing the gophers for this crime, which made it impossible to stay the night in Johnson Valley under a pouring rain. We broiled ptarmigan and had supper, and then made our difficult way up the ravine once more, reaching the top in the dusk. The tramp across the rough limestone surface of the ridge was made through sleet and snow in the gathering gloom, turning to the sheer darkness of a rainy night before we stumbled down to the camp in Horseshoe Valley, following the foam of the creek to the spruce-tree on its bank. The first to arrive lit a gorgeous fire, and by ten o'clock all were in, and a second supper of goat-meat was fried to atone for the hardest day's work of the summer.

After a dismal night under wet blankets, Grier and I rose early without rousing our partners and walked six miles through the wet bushes to catch the seven o'clock train for the east.

## The Canadian Rockies

Mose's copper claims were of no importance, but this interesting glimpse of the cathedral type of mountains in the centre of the Rockies was worth the time and labour. Not long after Silver City lost the rest of its inhabitants, and good log-houses could be rented for nothing. Even the name has now disappeared, and the flag-station is called Castle. The almost equally fraudulent name of Golden, at the mouth of the Kicking Horse, has held its own, though the town suggests the precious metal only when the yellow poplar leaves are falling in the autumn.

Reaching Morley in due time, I wanted to cross the river and walk to my brother's ranch. Some Indians were fording on their ponies, stripping off their leggings to keep them from getting wet in the last twenty yards, where they had to swim. I was told that there was a boat on the other side, and shouted for the ferryman, being mocked by some merry boys, who finally called the man. He came over on his horse and stood on the shore with his bronze legs wet and glistening while he made a bargain to take me over for two *shunias*. I understood his two fingers held up and the word *shunias* (silver), and agreed to the terms. Explaining by signs that he would have to go down the river for the boat and tow it up, he splashed back again on his horse, and before long I saw him wading up the shallow water with the boat. Two wrinkled old squaws, with their heads covered with blankets, joined me in the boat, and apparently my two *shunias* paid the passage for all three.



## Castle Mountain

A four miles' walk to the ranch over the stony terraces of the valley under a hot noon sun without a rag of romance made a striking contrast with my former journey in the same direction through the marvels and enchantments of dawn and sunrise.

## PART II

### *SELKIRK TRAILS*, 1885

## CHAPTER V

### THE SELKIRKS AND THE COLUMBIA

THE snowy Selkirk range, right in the heart of the British Columbian Mountains, and 250 miles from the sea, is completely surrounded by water, and in a sense may be called an island, three hundred miles long, eighty wide, and two miles high.

The great Columbia River, with its tributary, the Kootenay, encircles it on all sides except for a mile or two on the east, where Mr. Baillie Grohman cut a canal some years ago and completed the girdle of water.

Coming down from the Kicking Horse Pass through the Rockies you face the mountain wall of the Selkirks; but before they can be reached the Columbia must be crossed, already a powerful river, as we had found in the summer of 1884, though it is less than a hundred miles from its source.

If you wriggle your way for eighty miles through the Selkirks as the railway does, you come once

## The Selkirks and the Columbia

more upon the Columbia, a muddier and far larger river than before, but now flowing south instead of north-east.

The Selkirks are not quite so high as the Rockies, but are quite as Alpine in appearance. Their heavier snowfall provides *névé* and glaciers where the Rockies would be bare, and their greater rainfall clothes the lower slopes and the valleys with an almost tropical rankness of forest, splendid to look upon but heart-breaking to force a way through.

The Columbia is the most whimsical of great rivers. It begins in the strange structural valley between the Rockies and Selkirks, where all large British Columbian rivers are fated to begin; flows north-east for 150 miles in a very mild-mannered way for a mountain river, so that even a two-man canoe is safe upon it; and then, in the heart of a rugged mass of mountains, breaks away from the north-west valley, falls a thousand feet in a series of canyons and rapids at the Big Bend, and turns due south to the State of Washington, ending its journey in the Pacific near Portland, Oregon. Many miles of it are navigated by steamers, but many other miles are made up of cataracts and falls.

Its valley is a patchwork of odds and ends and misfits of older valleys having a strange history not yet unravelled, but probably caused by unequal elevation of different parts of the mountain region.

After my glimpses of the Selkirks in 1884, I needed little inducement to visit them again the

## The Canadian Rockies

following summer to see the Columbia Valley on the opposite side, and especially to enter the Big Bend country where the placer miners had washed out their nuggets twenty years before. This was my first visit to a placer gold region.

By the summer of 1885 the Canadian Pacific Railway had crossed the Rockies and was just reaching out into the Selkirks, chopping, burning, and blasting its way through the rough mountain range where the moist climate made the work even more difficult than in the Rockies. Regular trains ran as far as Donald, fifteen miles down the Columbia from Golden, and there was now a bustling town where there had not been a house the year before.

Donald was the headquarters whence the army of conquest was organised and detachments were sent forward into the wilderness. Beyond this only construction trains made their way, starting when they chose, travelling to suit themselves, and finally reaching the end some time during the day. It was rumoured that one would start about five o'clock, so I was on hand at the hour, but had plenty of time to admire the sunrise pageant on the mountains, for it did not start till six o'clock.

The train moved slowly across the long bridge over the river, through the morning mists rising from the water, and then jolted and creaked up Beaver Valley towards Roger's Pass, straddling mountain torrents on wooden trestles, rocking and rolling over half-ballasted track, while we sat on the edge of the flat cars swinging our legs over

## The Selkirks and the Columbia

abysses or jerking them out of the way of half-removed forest trees.

Presently the scar of our track rose above the river, climbing steadily through the timber until we came to the end, at this time nowhere in particular, on the steep slope of the mountain up which marched the serried ranks of spruce and giant cedar.

The end was waiting here patiently for the highest wooden bridge in the world to spread its spidery legs of rough-hewn timbers above Stony Creek, raging three hundred feet below. Not long before two men at work on the bridge had fallen and been killed, and the others had "lost their nerve" for the time, delaying the work.

We dragged our dunnage from the flat car and dumped it among the stumps of the right-of-way before looking up quarters in the temporary city of canvas and logs in the valley, where all was bustle and turmoil as teams were brought up to load for the journey up the pass to the construction camps.

Next day a lazy cayuse took me along the tote road, the vilest road that can be imagined, made up of rocks and stumps and fathomless mud which the mules and the wheels splashed up for thirty feet on the tree trunks through which it wound like a black canal. Here and there a wrecked wagon or a dead horse or mule showed how strenuous the battle was.

Except where snow-slides had mowed down the trees, or some side-torrent left a gap in the forest,



## The Canadian Rockies

there was little to be seen of the canyon below or the snowy mountains above. Everywhere water was running as rills and torrents and rivers, all tearing along at their maddest pace toward the Columbia, and all raging to destroy the mountains that bore them; while the tangled lower thickets of bushes were spreading their matted tentacles and trailing stems and branches over the rocks for protection, and the spruces and cedars were anchoring everything as firmly as might be with their muscular roots. It was a splendid contest between frost and running water, and bushes and trees, for the life and death of the mountains; blundering man coming in as a marplot with his terrible servant, fire, to destroy in a day the protective forest that could not be replaced in a century.

One had the sense of a world in the making, all the forces struggling hotly to build, to conserve, and to tear down. Even the mysterious underground forces that uplift mountains and counteract the nihilistic glaciers and rivers must have been secretly at work, if not now, at least not long ago, for these young canyons, cliffs, and peaks in so ancient a range of mountains could only exist after a great upheaval to start the endless ball rolling again.

My drowsy buckskin pony splashed through the mud or turned aside from the abominable road into a side path beaten into the moss or the ruddy brown rotting logs among the lichen-draped trunks of the cedars; but my thoughts were more or less

## The Selkirks and the Columbia

in a whirl as I grasped the bustle and excitement of the conflict around me.

Now and then the woods opened, where a torrent spanned with a log bridge parted the trees, and patches of sky, beetling cliffs, blue tumbling glaciers, and white slopes of snow lifted one's thoughts higher. Then came the jolt and rumble of wheels, the crack of a whip, and I had to pull Buckskin into the bushes to let the heavy wagon thump and pound its way eastwards for a new load to feed the army in front.

The whole vast battle, the real thing of consequence for all the world, as to whether dry land should be devoured and vanish for good and all beneath the waters, then dropped from my mind; and once more man, the intruder, with his hideous roads and mules and railways, became the dominant force.

Another glimpse of the mountains showed that they were drawing on their caps of cloud, and the blue sky became overcast with a grey veil. The road through the woods grew sombre, and presently down came the easy rain of the Selkirks, for these mountains, unlike the eastern Rockies, are more accustomed to grey days of rain than to blue skies. It was evening and time to seek some shelter. The rain began to pour and to drip from the trees, and then the woods opened into a ragged little clearing of burnt stumps with some big tents and square stacks of baled hay, at one of the construction camps scattered along the line. On one of the tents was the sign "Dew Drop Inn," so I dropped

## The Canadian Rockies

in, after making sure that Buckskin had enough baled hay for his supper.

The big tent was undivided, but the rear opened into a little tent where one could observe the whole staff of the hotel—proprietor, clerk, cook, and waiter—embodied in one dirty man in his shirt-sleeves, engaged in frying bacon over a cracked stove. The supper of hot bacon and beans and tea, with stewed dried apples as dessert, was soon on the board, and as soon eaten by the half-dozen hungry guests who then gathered round the box stove in the large tent, for the rainy night was cool four thousand feet above the sea.

A little later every one unrolled his blankets and chose his bed on the earthen floor, picking a spot where no stream dripped from the roof. The hotel sign was not unwarranted, for the dews of heaven “dropped in” at many places that rainy night, and I had to shift my bed more than once before securing a permanently dry corner.

The muddy tote road wound on through the trees, stumbling and scrambling over rocks robbed of their normal padding of moss, till the canyon of Bear Creek ended at the wind-swept yoke between mountains called Roger’s Pass. The trough was bare of trees, not because of its elevation, which is only 4,300 feet and much below timber-line, but because the steep slopes on each side are the highway for avalanches, making trees impossible.

Mount Sir Donald rises to 10,600 feet near by, closely followed by several rivals, and every

## The Selkirks and the Columbia

winter vast masses of snow are hurled down their sides into the valleys.

A few years after the railroad was opened an avalanche swept the little station on the pass with its inhabitants into destruction. From the pass, severe in its unclothed rocks and precipices, the road bent down to the west, following a stream, the head waters of the musically named Ille-cille-wait River, like Beaver River, on its way towards the Columbia, but in the opposite direction and with a slope one thousand feet greater; so that it was in even a more furious hurry to get its work done and join the brimming Columbia.

Here Buckskin gave me plenty of time to see mountains and glaciers and leaping falls now invisible to the traveller on the observation-car, for so sure as there is fine scenery the train takes to earth like a rabbit, burrowing through a tunnel or swinging downhill through miles of those artificial tunnels the snowsheds. There was time to gaze up at many a peak, then nameless but now famous; at glaciers, some of them heading in the great Asulkan snowfield, one of the largest south of Alaska; to study the curves and loops of the pale, muddy green river whose roar came faintly up from hundreds of feet below; and then to go down to its margin among trees ever growing larger as we approached the Columbia Valley, till at last the cedars were giants ten or twelve feet through and 150 feet in height.

There were contractors' camps and engineers' camps here and there along the valley, where I



## The Canadian Rockies

had a welcome and a night's shelter, one of them the camp of Mr. Donald Mann, knighted and well known since as one of the heads of another great trans-continental railway.

In one place the tote road (in mid August) passed over thirty feet of solid snow six thousand feet below snow-line, the still unmelted remains of an avalanche, where one could study the effects of a cruel joke of Nature. Crossing the huge snow bank, under which a creek could be heard grumbling on its hampered way to the river, one stood at the melting edge, where belated winter was only now setting free the bound earth.

Here spring was beginning for the plants, ferns just unrolling their fronds, scotch-caps just opening their buds, and spring beauties were now in bloom ; while a few hundred yards away the scotch-caps and other plants had long ago ripened their fruit, and their leaves were beginning to turn brown or red with the first touches of autumn. It was pathetic to see the hopeful look of the opening leaves and budding flowers.

Glaciers and snowfields were left behind as I trotted along a flat trail into the broad valley of the Columbia, bounded with dim, smoke-shrouded rows of mountains, low and grimy ghosts of mountains not at all attractive after the severe, clean-cut splendour of Roger's Pass. I was once more in a " city " of five or six hundred people, nine-tenths men, the forerunner of the present Revelstoke. It was about six months old, but already had a history, for it had been swept by the



## The Selkirks and the Columbia

inevitable fire, which not only licked up the log and canvas buildings but destroyed many square miles of splendid forest around.

The city was once more housed, many of the log buildings blackened by fire, and close by there rose dismal black trunks into a sky still grey with smoke. The coppery sun shone down intensely hot on the whitish-grey street, literally of dust and ashes, and at a little distance the broad Columbia, a grey flood of muddy water, licked and lapped at its muddy banks, which every now and then caved and collapsed where undermined by the current.

An uglier place probably never existed than this first edition of Revelstoke, with the smoke and ashes of its premature conflagration still hovering about it. All western towns have to be burnt at least once in their youthful days, but this still unnamed "city" at the second crossing of the Columbia had been the most precocious of all.

Perhaps I was not in the mood to do the village justice, however, for after three days of broiling sun on its one hideous street I could find no boat with which to go up the river to the goldmines. It is true that certain citizens were building a boat on one of the vacant lots, but they found it necessary to "liquor up" so often at Hanson's bar, and felt it so important to adjourn for every dog-fight or horserace, that my holidays would certainly be finished before their boat was.

The brazen sun of a fourth morning found me wandering hopelessly along the white road quiver-

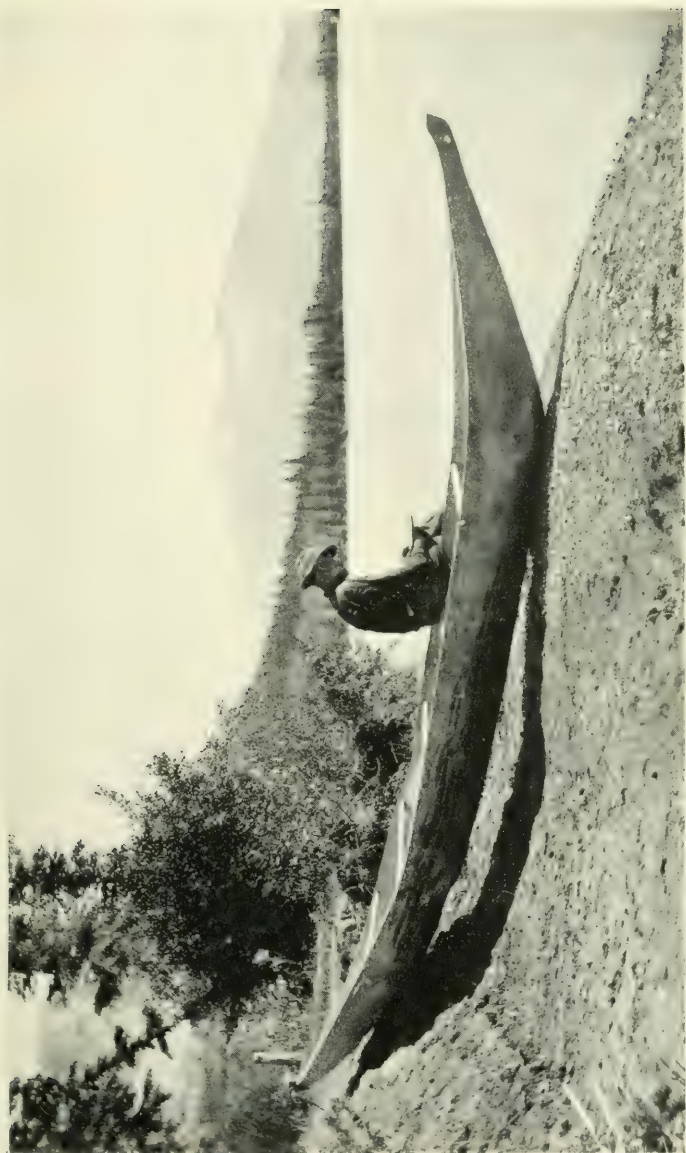
## The Canadian Rockies

ing with heat. I had heard the stories of the florid judge, and of the sheriff, famous for his brilliant imagination, I had made inquiries in all quarters as to a trail to Laporte through the woods, with the discouraging answer that the trail was hardly begun, and it was no use to try to get through with horses; and my mind was nearly made up to saddle Buckskin, if he could ever be caught again among the many miles of range, and go back up the pass.

My feet turned aimlessly toward the river, where there was sometimes a breath of cooler air, and my eyes fell upon the yellow gleam of fresh-hewn pine. A dug-out, just finished, was lying on the shores, and its three builders and owners were discussing what to do with their craft. I was soon beside them and found that they had been disgusted with railway work, and had made the canoe to go down the river to Washington, where life was supposed to be less strenuous.

They did not require much persuasion to go up the river prospecting, instead of down, and in a few minutes I became fourth partner on condition of paying \$12.50 into the general funds. It was further stipulated that I should provision myself and perform a fair share of the navigation.

The future now looked rosy, and in a day or two we had everything ready at a snug harbour half a mile above town out of reach of loafers, who seemed to make up at least half the population. Under the guidance of Frenchy, who was an old Ottawa lumberman, we prepared oars and



A DUG-OUT CANOE.



## The Selkirks and the Columbia

outriggers and purchased eighty feet of strong rope.

Meantime our friends in town had heard of the enterprise and prophesied all sorts of disasters if we ventured up the river when it was booming. The hot weather was melting the snow on ten thousand square miles of mountain-sides, so that the Columbia was in full flood, and I believe my partners would have backed out if the \$12.50 had not already been turned into flour, beans, and side bacon.



## CHAPTER VI

### UP THE COLUMBIA

WHEN all was ready two of us put our oars on the outriggers, Frenchy took the stern with his paddle, and the fourth man let out the line and stepped on board. We were out in the current, every man pulling his best, and were steadily going down-stream stern foremost. The Columbia in flood was too much for us, and in a few minutes we should be slipping past the city to the joy of all the friends who had given such good advice. There was nothing to do but go ashore as quickly as possible and put a stop to our downward progress. Then the long rope was uncoiled and the ex-guardsmen and I went ashore to tow, while the others with paddles or poles kept the boat on her course.

We soon found that tracking up the Columbia was no matter for joking. As long as the strip of muddy beach lasted we got along well enough, but presently the bank was undermined, and the guardsman and I had to scramble along the top of the low cliff, passing the rope round trees and bushes and hauling the canoe up hand over hand.

## Up the Columbia

Then a long, slender tree, overturned but anchored by its roots, stretched quite beyond reach of our rope, its free end whipping the water as it struggled with the current. The man in the bow chopped the tree and we went on ; but tree after tree met us in the same way, some too large to cut without great waste of time. Sometimes the canoe was pulled up by all hands clinging to the branches, and twice the current caught us, and we rowed with all our strength across to the other side, where the same work began again.

It needed a day and a half to advance five miles up-stream to the foot of the Dalles, a heavy rapid, where every one foretold trouble. We camped at an eddy below the rapids, which were hidden by a point of rock ; but the roar, and the revolving drifts of foam, and the irregular rise and fall of the water, like an animal panting for breath, were evidence enough of what was beyond.

There were two portage paths across the rocky ridge which made the rapids, and we crossed by the new one, easy to follow, climbing right over the steep hill, and returned by an old one clinging to the cliffs along the river, and in one place passing behind a waterfall which sprang from the rock wall above. Near the old path Frenchy found some one's abandoned pack mouldering under a tree, and on opening it saw only a rotten blanket and clothing and some musty flour. There was no clue to the fate of its owner. Near the head of the portage a cedar canoe had been built, as one could see from the stump and chips, and

## The Canadian Rockies

below the cliff on the rocks were its smashed remnants. Apparently it had just been launched when it was wrecked.

Even Frenchy, an old hand at work in the rapids, did not like the look of the Dalles, but our dug-out was too heavy for the four of us to pull out of the water, much less carry across the hilly portage, so that we set about dragging it up stage by stage against the current.

A whole day of risks and hard work was spent in getting the empty canoe up the rapids. Once it upset and spilled out the oars and paddles, and at another bad place the rapid was too much for our united strength and the canoe broke away, but was caught in an eddy lower down.

Once above the Dalles, we were triumphant and felt that the worst of the voyage was over, for no more rapids were reported from this to Dalles des Morts, above La Porte, where our canoeing was to end.

In the morning, after hewing out our new paddles and oars, we set out in good spirits to row up-stream, hoping that a day or two would cover the thirty miles left of our journey by river ; but in half an hour we were baffled by a current too swift to make head against, sweeping round a smooth point of rock too high and much too long for our eighty feet of rope, and landed once more discouraged. Some white animal, perhaps a goat, had come down to drink in the dusk the night before, and had been pursued in vain by our two hunters ; and now the Frenchman sug-

## Up the Columbia

gested we should camp and go hunting in the mountains for a few days till the river fell. He was sure of getting a goat with his "raffle." Others were in favour of rowing across to the other side, where the shore looked all right for tracking, but there was some risk that we might be swept down the rapids, half a mile below, and add four more to the prospectors drowned in the Columbia.

After some debate we decided to cross the river. The guardsman and I put our oars on the outriggers, and Frenchy and Mac at stern and bow got ready for a supreme effort. The bow swung into the current and we headed across, pulling our utmost, but quickly sweeping sideways towards the head of the Dalles, and we had already been half deluged with a wave when, just in time, the old Frenchman gave the canoe a big thrust into an eddy, and the risk was over.

Canal horse work began again for the guardsman and myself, and at the rate of about ten miles a day our heavy canoe was dragged up-stream. Then came a change of weather. Instead of hot sun there was pouring rain, and the unreasonable Columbia rose higher than ever, making progress almost impossible.

We had camped beside the new trail just too late to save our goods from soaking, and were sitting disconsolate round the fire getting supper ready, when a boat came down the river and a party landed beside us, placer miners just come from the Big Bend, and each one brought a showy gold

## The Canadian Rockies

specimen in his pocket. "Was there gold at the Big Bend?" "Why, sure!" "Yes, there was plenty of gold, but it was too late to go in there this fall." Then, without accepting our invitation to supper, they went on with the current toward the Dalles, where they would leave their bateau and walk into the city.

This visit was not the only one. Towards evening a powerful-looking man carrying a pack came to our fire out of the dripping woods. He needed little persuasion to fling his pack into a corner of the tent and stay the night, and turned out to be H., a well-known prospector, on his way to the Big Bend to examine and report on a claim for a mining company. He was a thorough believer in himself and his goldmines, a hearty laugh and talker, and a man of unusual talent in swearing, all of which naturally made him popular.

The two visits worked a transformation. We no longer felt dejected. If other men had luck in gold-mining, why shouldn't we? So we had a jolly evening by the fire while the rain dripped from the trees, laughing over old misfortunes and planning what should be done with the gold when we got it. Grizzled old Frenchy put half of his grey moustache into his mouth to chew, after his whimsical habit, and the firelight gleamed in his eye as he talked about his family from which he had not heard for years, for he could not read. Mac boasted of his former grandeur before he lost a fortune by the bursting of the Winnipeg boom; and the tall, bony guardsman told of a soldier's



## Up the Columbia

life in three armies, the British, the American, and the Canadian. He had reached Winnipeg with Sir Garnet Wolseley at the time of the Red River expedition. When he had made his pile he would go home. Our new friend had all sorts of ambitious plans, some of which have since come true, unlike all the other pipe dreams of the evening.

Next morning when H., the prospector, went his way, I joined him, leaving my share of the canoe and supplies to my partners, and shouldering a flour-sack with a blanket and provisions for a few days. The others were to follow with the canoe when the river fell. The new trail ended in a mile or two, and we had to push through bushes following an old trail of blazes, H. going ahead with the axe. Before the day was over the axe was driven into the palm of his hand by an accident, making a frightful gash, leaving the sinews bare. The wound was bound up with his handkerchief, and I urged him to go back; but he was not made that way and dashed ahead at a pace that left me breathless, every now and then striking the hand on something and bursting into a volley of oaths. The chopping and cooking now fell on me.

The first night caught us in the midst of a hopeless cedar swamp, a labyrinth of fallen trunks ten feet through and so long that we had to go round immense distances. It began to rain, and cedars, unlike spruces, give no shelter; so we finally camped under a dead tree that had split in falling, one half resting on another log with a

## The Canadian Rockies

space beneath. With a fire just outside we were fairly comfortable, but had a start in the night by hearing some large animal snapping sticks not far off.

Next night was spent in the ruined shack of a gold-miner on Cairn's Creek. We bridged the creek by chopping a tree, bent into a bow in the middle by the strong current, and on the third day reached Downie Creek, the largest one we had to cross, only four miles from Laporte. Once more a tree was felled, but was too short and was swept down-stream. While cutting a second one, larger and longer, the axe-handle broke, putting an end to bridging operations.

A raft was the next thought, but with a broken axe and no rope that was hopeless. We could see a raft moored to a tree on the other side left by the last party which crossed, and I swam after it, since H. could not swim ; but the strong current swept the raft down towards the Columbia in spite of my pole, and I had to jump overboard and swim back to H., who was running along shore with a branch for me to catch.

Finally we walked up the creek, hoping to find it shallow enough to wade, but found instead a terrible strip of country, all muskegs and beaver dams, so that, too, was given up, and we returned to the Columbia in the darkness.

Evidently our only hope was to go back to the canoe and come up-stream with it, so we started back on the trail, H., travelling furiously, cursing himself, his luck, the woods, the mountains, the

## Up the Columbia

Company that employed him, and mankind and things in general in the most thorough and comprehensive way. I began almost to fear for his reason; but there was no need for that. It was simply the natural outlet for his feelings and was really artistically done, so that presently he was in good-humour again, in spite of his having to fight against the adverse set of the bushes. All the parties had come this way, bending the branches before them, and going back was decidedly harder, like wading up-stream.

At Cairn's Creek we saw the Frenchman's dingy tent under some balsam poplars across the river, and a shout brought the canoe to ferry us over.

The river had fallen, and H. elected himself captain, working like a demon in spite of his wounded hand, so that we made fair speed by poling and tracking, slowly creeping towards a fine peak with a large glacier on one side, coming abreast of it, when it half filled the sky beside us, then creeping away from it. The mountains, both of the Selkirks and of the Gold Range to the west, seemed snowier and more impressive than near the railway, some reward for our hard fight against the current.

At last we reached Downie Creek, the signal for a volley of parting anathemas from H., and then rounding the point, landed at La Porte, the gateway of the goldfield, with its three ruined log houses and one tent. The city had one inhabitant at the time, left in charge of supplies while his partners were off on an expedition.

## CHAPTER VII

### THE BIG BEND GOLDFIELD

HALTING only for dinner, we left the guardsman in charge of our surplus outfit, including Frenchy's tent, and set off for McCullogh Creek, eighteen miles inland, H.'s destination. The old trail, well beaten twenty years ago when some thousands of men had eagerly tramped it, was still in fair condition; and next morning Gold Stream, the main river, was reached, with McCullogh Creek entering just opposite. Crossing in a leaky-dug-out, we were in the first placer mining camp any of us except H. had ever seen.

The weather-beaten log shanties of McCullogh town stood on the gravel flat where the creek entered the river waiting for tenants, but up the steep gulch of the small mountain torrent all was desolation, as if fire, earthquake, and flood had done their work. Every yard of gravel had been hewn with picks, shovelled into barrows, and washed in sluices, leaving grey chasms in the green, reaching almost to timber-line on the divide. We halted for the night in the last cabin, sound of roof but windowless and doorless and very cool as a sleep-

## The Big Bend Goldfield

ing chamber, with the chill night air flowing over us down the valley.

The whole gulch was growing up with berry-bushes and saplings, Nature doing her best to cover the scars and restore health to the valley, and there were only two small parties of miners at work on the creek, one driving a tunnel and the other sinking to bedrock, so that there was very little to suggest the bustle of former days when fortunes were made in a season.

Next day we went four miles farther into the mountains to French Creek, much larger than McCullogh, where there must have been quite a town of cabins, laid out in regular streets, now, however, all burnt except one, though some houses were still in good condition higher up the valley.

My companions had been waked from their dreams of sudden wealth by a look at these desolate valleys, and began to feel downcast over their prospects. They decided to fit up the best of the cabins, rebuilding the fireplace of stones and the chimney in one corner, so as to spend the winter hunting and trapping and be ready to work a claim in the spring ; but how their venture turned out I never heard. H., however, quickly sized up the location he had been sent to examine and turned back to Revelstoke. For the few days I could spare I explored the region with Frenchy, a most cheerful and resourceful companion. When we arrived at McCullogh town it turned out that the baking-powder had been left behind, so that unleavened pancakes made our chief diet ; but Frenchy, before



## The Canadian Rockies

leaving the camp, got half a yeast cake from one of the parties there and started "sour dough" bread. His pack was the flour-sack, and the warmth of his body kept the yeast at work, so that in the evening the dough was ready to bake, a little being reserved and mixed with more flour and water for next day's bread. He had evidently not been cook in a lumber camp for nothing. The two of us explored French Creek to its head, and from the divide had fleeting glimpses through the opening clouds over the savage wilderness of the Selkirks to the north and east, a series of wild, ice-covered peaks not yet explored, but apparently quite equal to the fine mountains climbed and mapped by Green and Wheeler near Glacier on the railway. My time was so short that no high climbing could be attempted, and the lowering weather made such work unattractive.

We explored one of the side gulches, which needed some stiff rock-climbing, and ended in the clouds at timber-line, where all was clammy with new-fallen snow. Coming down to our packs, left under a tree in the valley, rain began to pour, and we sought out a dry camp under a big spruce, feathered to the toes with drooping branches. A balsam and two birches stood about it, making a snug enclosure, and with the axe the lower dry branches were soon stripped, and with some rags of bark from the birches a fire presently roared just beyond our roof. The layer of brown twigs and leaves under the spruce made a splendid bed, and after drying up our clothes and getting supper,

## The Big Bend Goldfield

things seemed very homelike ; and Frenchy told me, between puffs of his pipe, all sorts of stories of bears, wolves, and lumber camps.

In a day or two it was time for me to go back to civilisation. It was late in September, and the rain, which fell every day in the valley, fell as snow higher up, so that the snow-line, when the clouds lifted, was far down the mountain-sides. Bidding goodbye to my partners, now all together at French Creek in the best of the unburnt houses, there was a lonely tramp of twenty-three miles before me on the way to La Porte. Good-hearted Frenchy had baked me a fair-sized loaf, so that I had food for the journey, which was to be made in one day, as there was no good stopping-place short of the Columbia.

The sun was shining when I started, but rain was falling again before McCullogh Creek was reached ; and there, by ill-luck, the canoe was on the wrong side of Gold Stream, and had to be swum for before my pack could be ferried over. Why is a swim so uninviting on a rainy day?

The long trail back to La Porte, grown up with dense bushes, furnished a fresh bath of cold water for every step, and the blanket in its flour sack on my back grew heavier hourly with the rain soaking into it ; so that the tramp through ferns and devil's clubs, over slippery fallen logs, between grey, bedraggled cedars yielding no shelter, was a long misery. It was evening before the edge of the bench above La Porte was reached, and, to my joy, a brisk fire was burning before one of the

## The Canadian Rockies

tents. The two British Columbian miners, Macmillan and Lyon, who took my bag from my back and supplied hot tea and hot bean soup beside a hot fire, and then looked me up a dry shirt and blanket, were certainly ministering angels.

Next day I rested, and Lyon lent me "Felix Holt" to read. On the flyleaf was the name of Bailie Grohman the hunter, and author of "Camps in the Rockies."

On the way down the trail my conscience had been at work over the problem of our canoe. Would my one-fourth share justify me in running down in it to the Dalles and leaving it there out of reach of my partners? Arrived at La Porte, my conscience was relieved of temptation, for H., who did not own any share in it, had already taken it down the river.

The problem now was how to make my way to civilisation. As there was no boat within reach I loafed a day or two, waiting for things to turn up, one afternoon walking up the shore to the Dalles des Morts, where, according to the story, a party of sixteen Hudson Bay men, on their way down from Boat Encampment, ran on a rock and met their death. It was a rough piece of water, but not so bad as the Dalles near Revelstoke.

While waiting two young men came up from below and had an odd experience. They had driven their horses across Downie Creek and were rafting their stuff over, reaching the north side safely; but there the current was too strong and swept the raft, with all their grub and outfit, into

## The Big Bend Goldfield

the Columbia, leaving them bare of everything except their clothes. They managed to cross the creek, and ran some miles down the Columbia, where they were lucky enough to find raft and cargo revolving in an eddy.

## CHAPTER VIII

### RETURN TO THE RAILWAY

AFTER three days' waiting I was rescued by a Mr. Barrett, who came from the gold region with ponies on his way to Revelstoke, and was very willing to have a partner. We built a raft at La Porte, swam the horses across Downie Creek, and then rafted down the river beyond the mouth of the creek, landing comfortably beside the trail.

Mounted on Bony, one of the pack ponies, and riding on a pack-saddle covered with my blanket, and with jury stirrups of rope, I brought up the rear, while Barrett led the way, now greatly improved by the work of a party of trail-cutters, who had bridged the smaller creeks and cut away the bushes. The rain still continued, making travel very dreary, especially as we had no tent and slept under a tree or a blanket during the two nights of the journey. The third evening saw us still some miles from the city, but we pushed on in the darkness. Bony, whose nature suited his name, was now used up and had to be dragged along; mounting him to cross a creek, he fell, and I had to scramble off in the mud and help him out. The



## Return to the Railway

trail was simply the wettest and muddiest of the openings between the trees, and had to be felt for with the feet, except where a glimmer from the sky was reflected in the pools ; and, to add to the weirdness of the night, rotten wood gleamed up here and there with an unearthly phosphorescence.

We were glad enough to come out of the woods and see the lights of the log city. It had struck me as God-forsaken and repulsive when I arrived from the east ; but now it looked quite dazzling and cheerful to come out of the rain into the office of the hotel, which was also the sitting-room and bar-room ; and one did not at all resent the good-humoured inquiry, spiced with a dash of profanity, whether we had " struck it rich."

Hanson's had made great strides in the month past, for instead of climbing up to bunk with all the rest of the lodgers in the big chamber above, I was actually given a whole room of my own. A " lean-to " of whip-sawn cedar had been put along one side of the house and divided into a dozen little chambers. You could see your neighbour's candlelight through the cracks between the boards, but otherwise you enjoyed strict privacy. It is true there was only one basin and one towel for all in the narrow alley-way, but one should not be too exacting.

There was no woman connected with the establishment, for Hanson prided himself on the respectability of the house ; and the staff consisted of strapping young Swedes and Finlanders, except Hermann the chamberman, who brought

## The Canadian Rockies

buckets of water from the river. He was a refined, almost aristocratic-looking German, who confided in me as one who spoke his language. His life here would soon be over. When he was fifty he should go back to Germany and take refuge in a *Stiftung* provided for needy gentlemen of his rank.

Settling my account in the morning, the bank bills in my pocket-book were mouldy, after ten days in clothes that had never been dry.

The journey back to the end of the advancing railway was uneventful, except that I travelled in great state with Mr. Lukes, the paymaster of the railway, who carried with him a good many thousands of dollars for the monthly payments to contractors. His cavalcade was armed, and included a mounted policeman with carbine slung over his shoulder ; but, in reality, life and property were nearly as safe there in the mountains, in an unwashed crowd of all nationalities, as at home in the settled east. The pair of mounted policemen posted here and there along the right-of-way seemed mostly concerned in keeping whisky beyond the ten-mile limit.

The excursion to the Big Bend had not been wholly a success ; rain and all kinds of delays had sadly cut down the time available for a real study of the mountains, such as I had planned ; but from one of the passes ravishing glimpses of sunny and shadowy mountains in the distance had opened up when the veil of clouds parted, each vision differing from the others as if a totally new land-

## Return to the Railway

scape was revealed by the passing mists. On the whole, the high mountains of the northern Selkirks remained a tantalising mystery, however.

The old placer mining region furnished a strangely interesting study from the geological as well as the human side.

Many thousands of feet of the ancient green schists, with their gold-bearing quartz veins, must have been destroyed by frost and glaciers and rivers, the heavy gold settling down among the quartz pebbles and being caught by the "riffles," where jagged edges of schist rose in the bed of the creeks. The whole was hidden under the heavy growth of British Columbian valleys, until the hordes of miners had harvested the richest of the Californian placers, and in the early sixties began to swarm north-west over Oregon and Washington, overflowing along the Columbia and Fraser valleys into British Columbia. It was a strange army of thousands, recruited from the sturdiest men of all nations, that invaded these peaceful valleys clothed with ancient forests. Now, in the days of railways and steamboats, it is not easy to imagine the hardships of that advance into a hostile wilderness, the toil through cedar swamps and devil's clubs, or over the rocks or snowfields, with heavy packs on the back of man and beast ; or the slavish tracking of heavy dugouts or *bateaux* against stiff currents, with here and there a wild rapid.

When the right valley was reached, and the pan filled with dirt dug from bedrock showed a long string of colours after washing, a detachment of

## The Canadian Rockies

the army set to work in a frenzy, cutting trees, building cabins, sawing out boards for sluices ; and then the real attack began with pick, shovel, and barrow, tearing the valley to pieces, washing down the mud into the river, piling up the boulders in hills, elbowing the creek out of its bed and carrying it miles in ditches and flumes so that the hoards hidden in the lowest points might be ransacked.

A town sprang up in a month where no one but an Indian hunter had ever appeared before, and for a season or two everything throbbed with fierce life--miners and their parasites, the whisky-sellers and gamblers and vile women, all plying their trades, some growing rich, others going dead broke. Then, almost suddenly, the placer was worked out. The hundreds of thousands or millions of dollars' worth of gold, sorted and sifted, and hidden by the creek during geological ages, had been looted and carried off, and the town was deserted. For a year or two more a few Chinamen, warned off while the diggings were rich, made wages from lower-grade gravels ; and then fire destroyed the cabins, and the valley sank back into wilderness again, and berry-bushes and saplings began to hide the old sluices and rock dumps, though here and there black water reflected the sky at the bottom of the shaft, or crumbling timbers stood at the gaping mouth of a tunnel. The creek had slipped back into its old channel, and furtively began again its work of sifting and sorting and hoarding. The bad dream is over, and peace has come back to the valley.

## PART III

### *CANOEING ON THE COLUMBIA, 1888*

## CHAPTER IX

### DOWN THE COLUMBIA IN SEARCH OF HIGH MOUNTAINS

A HIGH mountain is always seductive, but a mountain with a mystery is doubly so. No one will wonder, therefore, that when I studied the atlas and saw Mount Brown and Mount Hooker, the highest points in the Rockies, standing one on each side of Athabasca Pass, I longed to visit them. They were said to be fifteen or sixteen thousand feet high, and Reclus even put Mount Hooker at 5,180 metres (16,990 feet). No one seemed to know who had measured these peaks, the highest between Mexico and Alaska, though it was reported that the botanist Douglas, who crossed the pass in 1872, had given them their names.

The pass, after its discovery by Thompson in 1810, had been used by hundreds of voyageurs of the North-West and Hudson Bay Companies. One can imagine the hardy fellows toiling up four thousand feet over the fearful trail from Boat Encamp-



## The Canadian Rockies

ment on the Columbia, and flinging down their 90-lb. packs of beaver skins with a huge grunt of relief at the Committee's Punchbowl. While they straightened their backs they must surely have taken a look at these giants to the north and south, and yet no one had ever mentioned them. The artist Paul Kane crossed the pass in 1846 and did not sketch the mountains. Much later the Canadian Pacific Railway engineers, looking over the passes for an easy route to the ocean, had traversed the same trail and had been equally silent as to lofty mountains. Could there be any mistake as to their height?

My eyes turned to them irresistibly whenever I looked at the map, and my mind was soon made up to visit and, if possible, climb them.

In order to get there one had, it appeared, only to canoe seventy miles down the Columbia from Beavermouth on the railway, and then follow the old portage trail up Wood River to the pass at the foot of Mount Hooker. Many of the goldminers navigated this part of the Columbia twenty-five years before on their way to the Big Bend placers, and there should be no insuperable difficulty for a practised canoeman like myself, so the route was decided upon.

Frank Stover, whom I persuaded to join me, had excellent reasons for going. He had never paddled a canoe, nor climbed a mountain, nor shot a grizzly, and earnestly desired to do these things.

About noon, on July 10, 1888, Frank and I stood by the Columbia, at the little lumber town

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of Beavermouth, loading our blankets and supplies in a light Peterboro' canoe, which tugged at its painter in an eddy behind an overturned tree.

"Old Uncle" and the brown-eyed French Canadian station-master had come down in their shirt-sleeves to see us off. Hitherto we had met no one who knew more of the Columbia than I did myself, but Old Uncle had been down fifty miles to Lake Kimbasket, and warned us that half-way down we should meet Surprise Rapids, which we should on no account run; and below the lake, he had heard, there was an eighteen-mile canyon that only one man had come through alive, which did not seem entirely encouraging. I knew of the canyon, but thought we might turn off before reaching it. Meantime our traps were in the canoe, with Frank in the bow; and as I stepped into the stern and pushed off into the current, Old Uncle's parting words were, "Well, solong, boys! I wish ye may come back safe; but I wouldn't resk my life in that boat. She's too low. She'll fill before she gets into a rapid."

The swift current soon swept us round a bend out of sight of Old Uncle, and the station-master, and the yellow piles of lumber and all the other ugly bits of civilisation belonging to Beavermouth.

That afternoon was one of enchantment. A great river was swiftly taking us out of man's disfigured world, where axe and fire had done their wicked work, into the mysterious world of mountains. When the river hurried round a rocky point, or a heap of weathered driftwood, we hurried,

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too, and when it slackened its pace, in wide expansions reflecting woods and mountains, we loitered with it.

At one or two points the river split into several channels, running between avenues of great trees ; and there we kept the centre of the widest channel. On the left we had the Selkirks, and on the right the Rockies—two splendid ranges, with forest slopes, precipices, and snowy summits close at hand, or valleys opening into blue and white distances.

When the shadow of the Selkirks began to rise on the rosy western side of the Rocky Mountains, we camped on a low sandy island more than twenty miles down the river ; and here we were very warmly received by the inhabitants, an unusually venomous tribe of mosquitoes. The building of the fire, and cutting of poles and putting up of the tent, had to be carried on, like the building of the wall of Jerusalem, with one hand for work and the other for defence.

The fire gave some relief, though the Columbian mosquito can stand almost as much smoke as a man. Then came the baking of bannocks, when flour had to be poured into the pan, stirred with salt, baking-powder, and water, and mixed into dough. With fingers in the slimy paste I could not defend myself, and was severely punished. How many mosquitoes were worked into those bannocks I neglected to tell Frank, who was cutting spruce-boughs for the bed. As usual the first time, the bannocks did not rise properly ; and when Frank

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was called to supper, his hands smelling of the resinous spruce, he looked somewhat doubtfully at the two round, ashy cakes, the two tin plates, the tin cups, tin spoons and forks, and crisp, brown bacon, which ought to have been parboiled to take out the salt. He was as hungry as the mosquitoes that fed upon him, but ate very little supper. His heart must have sunk at the prospect of such provender for the next two months, but he was gentleman enough even to praise the bread, and to express his wonder at my ability as a cook.

In a few days he had learned to cook on his own account, ate as much pork and bannock as I did, praised them honestly, and drank his brown, creamless tea with no wry faces.

Next morning a brisk paddle rid us of our enemies, and our spirits rose. Old Uncle's warnings were absurd, and our expedition looked very prosperous. Then we began to hear a faint roar in the distance, and I noticed that the mountains crowded together a mile or two ahead in a way that was ominous. The roar grew louder, and the river took on those upboilings and lines of tension that forebode trouble—yet we could see no danger ahead. All at once the trees parted to the left, disclosing a downward swoop of water between walls of schist, and beyond this spouts of foam. It was Surprise Rapids. How long would it take us to portage past them? Old Uncle, on his voyage years ago, had "carried" on the right bank, so we landed at an eddy on the side



## The Canadian Rockies

of the river towards the Rocky Mountains and looked for a portage path.

We found only a fearful tangle of rocks and fallen trees, with no hint of a trail. Scrambling along the cliffs, an hour of hard work took us beyond the first plunge of the rapids, but as far as we could see down-stream there were flashes of white water, and the river for miles below was too rough for our little canoe.

It was evident that we should not make our portage on that side without a tremendous amount of hard work in chopping a trail. The path must surely be on the other side.

We turned back to our canoe with no loss of time, scourged by clouds of black flies and mosquitoes that left us bleeding, and made our second camp at the head of the rapids. Starting a big smudge to keep off our tormentors, we put up the tent, and at length had a few cubic yards of air free from humming wings and poisonous stings, where we could rest in peace and see a little of the world through the cheese-cloth curtain that closed the front. It was evident that our expedition was to be no holiday trip.

Cooking by the camp fire, two great dragon-flies cruised about us with whirring sounds, snapping up mosquitoes on the wing close to our faces. May their shadows never be less!

Next day we tried the south-western side of the river, and were overjoyed to find a blazed trail leading down-stream, hard to follow, since the scars left by the axe years ago had weathered grey, but



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still something to pick up here and there so as to keep the proper direction. There was very little in the way of a foot-worn path, and the dim blazes were not easy to distinguish in the dappled sunlight of the woods, so that we kept losing the way. Here and there a sapling had been slashed, but no logs were cut, and great fallen trees bent the trail away out of its course.

At one point the trail seemed to vanish altogether for a time, but after half an hour's skirmishing we found that it followed some rough-barked logs; then, plunging into a ravine, the trail crossed the creek at the bottom, first on a big fallen spruce, then stepped over to another one swung high over the water, then turned at an angle along a great cottonwood, and ended by balancing on a slender trunk swaying like a spring-board over a bed of devil's clubs lying in wait for any one whose foot slipped.

It was a perfectly reckless trail, thrusting its way under close-set alders and the shades of cedar swamps, where one's foot sank into the muck hidden by ferns and horsetails and giant skunk cabbage, then out into the glaring sun along labyrinths of fallen logs in a windfall. At last it ended on a steep slope down to the river, where a curve of beach, swept by wind and spray, just below the main falls, gave a blessed relief from the diabolical flies and mosquitoes. This path was most romantic, but did not promise well for our purpose of portaging the canoe and heavy packs. It ended below the heaviest fall, but from higher

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points we could see rough water for a long way down the river.

Surprise Rapids did not belie its name, and we began to wonder if we should ever make our way past. An old maxim now came back to me from former summers in the wilds of British Columbia—"When in doubt climb a mountain."

We decided to climb the nearest peak of the Selkirks and get a chance to look down on our enemy.

## CHAPTER X

### SURPRISE MOUNT

OUR nearest neighbour among the Selkirks was a triple-crowned peak, which could be reached by following up the creek in the ravine.

We took with us each a blanket and food for a day, while Frank had his rifle in addition. We were not in training, and it was Frank's first mountain, so that our ascent was broken by many halts, when we puffed and perspired and fought mosquitoes till our breath returned.

We followed the south bank of the stream through jungles of scotch-caps and bracken on the burnt ground, then through horrible tangles of alders, ferns, and devil's clubs higher than our heads, where every yard meant a struggle and every stumble meant a handful of prickles from the clubs. It was mournfully enlightening to Frank, whose rifle nearly doubled the difficulty among the bushes.

A dark grey "fool hen" sat invitingly on a spruce-branch in the ravine close by us, but there were only ball cartridges, and, trembling with the hard scramble, Frank's ball missed its head. Great was his surprise

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to see the fowl still sitting on the branch, cocking its head from side to side, intensely interested in the aim he was taking for another shot. A second report, and the plump bird dropped to the ground, and Frank averred that a hen in the barnyard would have been a more difficult shot.

Six hours after our start we made a camp somewhat below timber-line, four thousand feet above the river, not bad work considering the going. There was dry wood at hand and a heathery knoll for our bed, while a snow-bank melting in the sunshine just above provided a water supply. The mosquitoes were now losing heart, and when we started again, after a lunch, for a final climb to the summit the cool breeze swept the last of them away, a relief quite worth the climb.

The devil's clubs had been left behind some time ago; the woods had been thinning and the trees growing more stunted, till now, at 6,700 feet, they had dwindled to bushes. We had dropped our loads and were climbing over flowery slopes, where the plants were just bursting into bloom in their sudden summer, following the moist edge of the melting snowfields. Bumble-bees tumbled over the crowded blossoms in a regular intoxication, a humming-bird poised itself over the flowers, little gophers squeaked and stood upright beside their holes, or plunged terrified into them as we made our way up with feet sinking into the turf. A few belts of dwarfed and twisted spruce-bushes, with trunks a foot through, leaned against the steep







GLACIER BEHIND SURPRISE MOUNT.

## Surprise Mount

slope, and tracks and other signs showed that mountain goats had sheltered behind them.

Then came snowfields, slushy in the sun, and some stiff rock-climbing, and we found ourselves on a rugged point of rocks on top of the mountain, 8,400 feet above the sea and more than six thousand feet above our tent by the river.

Nothing more inspiring can be imagined than the view from the top, and Frank, exhausted as he was with the long climb, was overwhelmed by it and declared that our half-hour there was worth all the labour. It rather sobered him to think that Mount Hooker was perhaps twice as high and would need more than twice the climbing.

On the side we had climbed the slope had been steep enough, but to the west the ridge dropped off suddenly in precipices, and in the valley below we could see a torrent draining two glaciers, one of them descending with splendid seracs over two falls and ending a thousand feet beneath us. Beyond this valley to the south-west the main range rose two thousand or three thousand feet above us, including, no doubt, the highest peak known in the Selkirks, Mount Sir Sandford, triangulated from near the railway some years later by Mr. A. O. Wheeler and found to reach 11,634 feet.

It was a splendid array of snowy peaks, still largely unknown, though the immediate neighbourhood of Sir Sandford has recently been mapped by Mr. Howard Palmer.<sup>1</sup>

Three years before I had caught tantalising

<sup>1</sup> *Geographical Journal*, vol. xxxvii., No. 2, February, 1911.

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glimpses of the same group of mountains from near French Creek, twenty miles to the westwards, but stormy weather prevented any clear view.

However, we were more interested in what lay beneath us in the Columbia Valley, where the river ran as a pale blue ribbon sweeping between blackish, evergreen forest and the richer greens of burnt tracts and poplar-trees. The rapids were, perhaps, four miles away, and more than a mile below us, showing as white stretches interrupting the turquoise ribbon, while brownish and grey cliffs and promontories rose between the flood and the forest. Away below the falls and rapids we had seen in our scrambles along shore there were patches of white, the danger colour, for fully five miles, foreboding serious difficulties for our small canoe.

The valley was an admirable and strikingly tinted map for us to study, and all the crooks and turns of the river lay plain before us, outlined by forest, rock, and curves of sand, while many new features showed themselves. Lagoons and tributary rivers broke the forest here and there, and exquisitely coloured lakes lay among groves and marshes.

Beyond the Columbia Valley rose the great host of the Rocky Mountains, lighted by the evening sun, sweeping for more than a hundred miles from north-west to south-east, a simply glorious sight never quite equalled in earlier or later climbs.

There was every tone of vibrant colour, from the pale white and blue of far peaks at the horizon to the purplish black forest slopes a few miles

## Surprise Mount

away across the river. There must have been more than a hundred large or small snowfields and glaciers in view in the tremendous panorama. Even the outlook from the Spillimacheen ridge four years earlier and fifty miles farther south could not compare with it.

We looked with special eagerness away to the north, beyond the gleam of Lake Kimbasket, where a great pale mass, faint as a cloud, but with delicately exact outlines, lifted itself above the long valley and nearer mountains. Could it be Mount Brown, sixty or seventy miles away? Nearer and more to the east stood another giant that might be Mount Hooker. There stretched the promised land, but what lay between?

Opposite us in the Rockies a fine group of three peaks rose probably three thousand feet above us. Was the highest point the Mount Sullivan shown on our map? Far to the south-west we could follow the Columbia and the Rockies beyond it toward the Kicking Horse valley, but the lumber piles and smoke of Beavermouth were hidden by nearer peaks of the Selkirks.

The chill of evening warned us to get down to our camp at timber line. We had reached the top at 5.30, and now the sun was setting.

Our heather bed was none too dry, and chill airs swept down to us from the snowfield above, so that we had to supplement our two pairs of blankets with a good fire, and even then saw more of the steely stars in a black sky than was desirable.

The sunrise found us both wide awake and ready



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to make a stir over the fire to get breakfast. Then we parted, Frank to look for goats, and I to climb a lower point of our ridge to make sketches of the mountains. A striped gopher not much larger than a mouse came out of his hole, whistling softly, and climbed a bush a few feet away to watch me better. These little animals, and several larger kinds, especially the siffleur or marmot, whose shrill whistle startles you into looking round for the man calling his dog, do a very important work in the mountains, burrowing and shifting the soil downwards year after year. Two kinds of small birds flitted over the heather, and it gave one quite a shock to see them calmly launch out over the tremendous precipices to the west.

Frank found no goats, though there were fresh tracks, and brought back only a ptarmigan, which was delicious roasted before the fire.

After lunch we began the descent. In our struggle upwards the day before we agreed that nothing could be worse than our route along the south side of the creek ; so we took our way down on the north side. To our dismay the north bank proved far worse than the south ; but the snow-fed mountain torrent was too much flooded to cross to the other side.

In the higher levels our feet were tangled in the rhododendron, now covered with pale pinkish flowers, and lower down we plunged and stumbled through thickets of alder and devil's clubs, all the time harried by increasing clouds of mosquitoes. On a burnt stretch near the foot of the mountain



## Surprise Mount

we escaped from the jungle and Frank was roused from his weariness by the sight of large hoof marks, probably of caribou.

It was seven o'clock in the evening before we had crossed the bridge of fallen logs and reached our canoe by the river.

We were ready for a day or two of rest, and moved our camp, canoe and all, down the adventurous trail south of the river to the curve of beach below the falls. Portaging the canoe, balanced on our shoulders, along the fallen trees proved ticklish work ; but, as a reward, we escaped the mosquitoes in the spray-cooled breeze beside the falls ; and from this point we could more easily work out a trail past the five miles of rapids which we had seen from Surprise Mount.

A heap of bleached driftwood lay at the head of the beach, battered trees, and saw-logs, and bits of lumber with ends rounded by pounding against the rocks ; and one or two slender trunks had their butts fixed among the timbers so that the long taper ends writhed and struggled in the rapids. Now and then fresh logs came racing down, diving into the pool at the foot of the falls and coming up to revolve stupidly with a dozen others in the eddy, before making up their mind to go on downstream.

This eddy was our water supply, and it kept ebbing and flowing with a vague rhythm that made the filling of a bucket or the washing of one's face an exciting occupation.

The roar of the falls filled the air, and at night

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one's dreaming ear analysed the tumultuous sounds into distant music, shouting voices, the wail of wind in the shrouds, the dash of waves against a ship's side, the piping of the boatswain's whistle, and the rush of feet on the deck, till one woke up and looked out at a peaceful moon shining between black tree-trunks over a foamy swirl of water. The roar seemed part of the atmosphere, a soothing yet half-stunning envelope of sound, a tremendous background for any other sound, like a Wagnerian orchestra behind a singer. Talking became a labour to be avoided.

## CHAPTER XI

### LOOKOUT POINT

BEFORE long we had thoroughly explored the shore below the falls, and found that our trail presently turned off into the woods and disappeared. It was evidently made by some trapper, perhaps Old Uncle, for here and there along it there were dead-falls. To cut a trail past the five miles of dangerous water, through thickets and cedar swamps and over the steep sides of cliffs and ravines, would mean heavy chopping and much time ; so we reluctantly turned once more to the north-east side of the Columbia, searching for the well-travelled road made during the Big Bend gold excitement.

Once more we pushed inland from the head of Surprise Rapids, this time making our way up the Rocky Mountain side of the valley. Finding no trail, we followed the usual plan of climbing a mountain, the nearest outlier of the Rockies, which proved much easier of ascent than Surprise Mount, partly because the woods were open, without the lower forest of clubs and ferns and alders, and partly because its summit was only 7,750 feet above the sea.

## The Canadian Rockies

It was surprising to find timber-line at 7,300 feet, about 600 feet above the limit in the Selkirks. It seemed, in fact, as if the climate was different and decidedly drier than eight miles to the west across the valley. Probably the lower tree-line in the Selkirks comes from the heavier snowfall as compared with the Rockies.

This excursion was delightful in more ways than one, for the climbing was good, mosquitoes were few, and near the top we enjoyed the full sweep of the Selkirk Mountains. Now and then the roar of the rapids came to us faintly through miles of air, like an echo from home, but our tent was out of sight behind trees.

From the summit we looked north-eastward straight across a narrow valley to the snows and precipices of the fine three-topped mountain which we had travelled towards all the way from Beaver-mouth, and which we had judged to be Mount Sullivan when seen from Surprise Mount. On Dr. Collie's late map, however, the nearest peak is called Stephen's Range, and the Sullivan of the old maps has disappeared. We estimated the height of the mountain at four thousand feet above our Lookout Point, say eleven thousand or twelve thousand feet.

Our neighbour cut off from view all the mountains to the north and north-east, so that neither of the peaks we had thought to be Brown and Hooker were to be seen ; and it may be added that we never saw them again.

Our way down from Lookout Point was as easy

## Lookout Point

as that from Surprise Mount had been hard. Striding down through open bushes, we were soon beside the rapids ; but we failed to find the pony trail we had hoped for, since much of the ground had been burnt over. Near the river, however, we made a curious discovery just below the heaviest fall. Half buried in the bushes a large canvas tent lay rotting, and beside it were pack-saddles, a costly-looking kitchen range, a marble-topped washstand, and not far off a portentous heap of empty bottles. These strange relics lying twenty-five miles from the nearest inhabited house must have meant disaster to some outfit on the way to the French creek placers a quarter of a century before. The empty bottles may have had something to do with the untoward end of the expedition.

Not far off, in a small clearing grown up with bushes, we found the trapper's little shack, with moss and grasses sprouting from the roof troughs and the door hanging by one leather hinge. Inside were his old clothes, his battered tin cup and pail, and his bed of withered twigs, all mouldy and pathetic in decay ; and on our way back to camp we speculated as to his lonely snowshoe tramps along the lines of traps. Were there any thoughts in his mind beyond the price of mink and martin and otter ? For romantic seclusion and beauty of prospect his nook in the forest should have satisfied a poet. The rustlings and sighings and half-audible dirges of the pines and spruces behind blended well with the lapping of the great eddy on mossy



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stones and tawny sands in front of the clearing, and the distant roar of the falls ; while the snowy top of Surprise Mount with its glacier-filled cirques rose just across the river.

Your misanthrope should turn trapper. No other mortal so effectively renounces man and his works. He need not confront a human face for months, as long as the flour holds out in the sack and there is a plug of tobacco on the shelf.

One wonders if the lovely final owners of the furs ever think of their first owners' wild life in the forest twilight, or their fierce struggles and lingering death when the steel jaws have seized them, or of the silent man trudging noiselessly through the snowy woods while the winter days shorten and then lengthen again.

Frank and I looked out for big game whenever we came to *brulés* or snowslide tracks, where the splendid Rocky Mountain blueberries grow thickly. As we helped ourselves to the fruit with one hand and fought mosquitoes with the other, we always expected to see a grizzly rise to dispute our claim to the harvest, but he never did this when I was on hand. Once, however, as Frank was helping himself in a berry patch, a burly fellow lifted himself to have a look at the intruder, and Frank affirms that his head was as big as his own waistcoat ; but the bear made off heavily through the bush before the rifle could be unslung. The bear's taste in fruit is not of the best from the human standpoint. He prefers the nauseating sweet and bitter snake berries to the delicious blue berries

## Lookout Point

or scotch-caps or saskatoons ; however, *de gustibus non disputandum*.

Bear tracks and their scratching places six or eight feet up on the trees are very common along the Columbia, so that the bear population must be large. Of small game we secured marmots and squirrels, fool-hens and ptarmigan, the fowl excellent eating under all circumstances, the mammals endurable after a steady diet of bacon which has been exposed too long to the summer's sun.

## CHAPTER XII

### RUNNING SURPRISE RAPIDS

OUR explorations had finally convinced us that it would be unsafe to run any part of the rapids with our small canoe, and that to portage the canoe and outfit for five miles or more to quieter water would mean days of hard chopping in working out a trail, which at best would be very hilly and difficult. We concluded to set out on foot for Mount Hooker, fifty miles away, with 40-lb. packs of provisions and blankets, and with a little shelter tent for camping. The rest of our outfit we left in the large tent at the head of the rapids, and began our walk on the north-east shore, the side toward the Rocky Mountains.

Frank was not feeling well, though he would not put off the journey; but the heat was intense in the woods as we followed the trapper's vague trail, and before long it was evident that he could go no farther. We had passed the roar of the main fall when we sat down on a log to consider the situation, and then temptation overcame us. Why not go down to the beach, build a strong raft, and run swiftly and without labour down to Lake Kim-

## Running Surprise Rapids

basket? This plan had already been considered and rejected as too dangerous ; but Frank's indisposition now turned the scale in its favour, and we went down the oozy bed of an alder-shaded creek to the riverside, taking a drink on the way from the bark sprout placed there by the trapper for the convenience of passers.

We were soon at the right spot, where an eddy had piled up a great heap of driftwood during the time of high-water. Below the eddy a bold promontory of rock forced the river to a sudden bend, and from its top the rapids appeared passable for a well-built raft.

Here was our shipyard with timber right at hand in the driftwood stacked up by the eddy ; so our packs were soon lying on the upturned edges of the schist, the axe was unfastened, and we set to work chopping square timbers to the proper length. There were planks among the spoils to use as cross-pieces, and in some run-away boom logs from up river there were iron spikes, which we chopped out for later use. Unpleasantly suggestive were some thin painted boards from a wrecked boat, which we laid down as a floor to the raft.

With much hammering of spikes that kept the echoes busy, the timbers and planks were fastened together, and then the glacier rope was tied round each end of the raft to make things doubly secure.

With some heaving and prying the raft, already half in the water, was launched in the eddy and fastened with one end of the rope, while we got dinner with the chips lying about. When dinner

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was over each shaped a paddle and prepared a pole to suit himself, and finally the packs were made up carefully in their bags and wrapped in a water-proof to keep them dry if seas washed over. A strap was tied round them and made fast to the raft, and all was ready.

We made no haste in paddling across the eddy, for who knew what was beyond? Presently the current caught us and we were swept past the point on to the main stream, and I should have given much at that moment to go back, but it was too late.

The waves began to drive over our knees, and we paddled desperately to keep clear of a sharp island of rock ahead. From the top of the promontory we had thought the waves were not too much for rafting, but here at the level of the water they seemed mountains high, and we began to wonder if we should get through alive.

It was nonsense to paddle any more, for our raft was revolving end for end, and then a great billow fell upon us sideways and the raft overturned. There was a moment under water, snatched and tugged at by unseen fingers while I clung to the binding rope, and then I dragged myself upon the upturned bottom of the raft and saw Frank just scrambling up at the opposite end. I remembered that he could not swim and shouted to him to hold on for his life—as if he would not do that in any case!

We had missed the island, and were now far past it in the very centre of the current, the raft





SURPRISE RAPIDS.



## Running Surprise Rapids

plunging and revolving, while we shifted constantly to face the danger. One pitch followed another, the waves half smothering us from time to time. And now, right ahead, was the worst point of all: what the Ottawa raftsmen call a "cellar," where the water sinks down in front of a ledge of rock and flings itself back as a towering wave. A strange sensation of sinking into the depths was followed by a deluge of water leaping and trampling upon us, and then the raft struck heavily and was nearly dragged from under us. Was it going to pieces? Next moment we were above water again, half strangled but alive, and we supposed that the packs underneath the raft had struck and been torn from their fastenings.

The most violent part of the rapids was over, but we were flying straight for a jagged projecting rock at a sharp bend of the river. If we struck, the raft might go to pieces; so I braced myself and prepared to fend off with a pole that had caught in the binding rope. The pole was wrenched aside, nearly pushing me overboard, and we shot round the bend like a projectile, just grazing the rock.

The current now moderated, and, paddling with the pole, we gradually drew to the right shore, the one on which our canoe was left above the rapids. Frank caught an overhanging bough and we were soon moored to a stump at the foot of a steep-cut bank, none too soon, for the Columbia is largely snow-water and we were shuddering with the cold.

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Transport by raft had certainly saved some time, for we had come down at least four miles in fifteen or twenty minutes ; but, on the other hand, we had not been able to admire the fine scenery of the canyon on the way, and we had lost everything we possessed except our dripping clothes. Still, there was a certain thrill of pleasure and pride in having done it, though we did not want to repeat the exploit. Presently as we stood there, I on the raft and Frank perched on the stump, a disagreeable feeling came over us that without blankets, rifle, frying-pan, or axe life would be shorn of its comforts ; however, our rashness deserved a fine, for we had foreseen the danger to some extent before starting.

The romance of the situation had vanished and we began to think of scrambling up the steep bank when Frank caught sight of something black swaying in the water under the raft. There were the packs still enclosed in the waterproof, barely held at one end by the strap ! We blessed the honest leather of that ancient shawl-strap and no longer felt like shipwrecked mariners on a desert island.

Our water-soaked bags weighed a ton, and could hardly be dragged up on the steep shore beside the stump. The blankets and other soaked garments were drawn out and wrung before climbing the bank, which rose about seventy feet above the river, and in successive journeys all was carried up and spread out on rocks and bushes to dry in the afternoon sun. It was our most extensive washing day and was no doubt useful.

## Running Surprise Rapids

Rummaging in the dunnage-bags disclosed the welcome fact that very little damage had been done, though the sacks of sugar and salt, of course, were half dissolved and proved very troublesome to dry and as hard as bricks when dry; while the can of baking-powder had exploded and filled the bag it was in with foam. The matches, put inside the blankets for safety, were so slimy that I was for throwing them away, but Frank spread them in the sun and actually coaxed one to light with a lens as burning glass. Soon a splendid fire was roaring while our clothes and blankets steamed on poles about it.

Before night everything was dry, and when we had fried bacon and made tea to accompany the sodden bannocks for supper we agreed that life was decidedly worth living. By the time our little shelter tent was pitched we were glad to crawl into the blanket bags, for which there was just room and no more under the low roof of cotton. We felt quite happy and heroic, but it was hard to get to sleep, and we chatted over the events of the day. If the raft had gone to pieces, it would have been a first-class mystery. What would have been Old Uncle's speculations when he came down the river for his winter's trapping and found our deserted tent and canoe above the rapids? and how long would it have been before our friends missed us and sent out a search expedition? At last sleep came and the day was done.

Morning found us sore in body and dejected in mind, and we wondered at our lack of sense in



## The Canadian Rockies

running the rapids. We had risked our lives and gained nothing at all, for we should have to go back to camp for baking-powder if nothing else. Would it not be better to give up our wild-goose chase, do some climbing near by, and return to Beavermouth?

However, one hates to turn back before every effort has been made to reach one's object; so we tramped through the heat to the head of the rapids to get the needful stores, stopping a few minutes on the cliff opposite the island of rock to gaze on the scene of our upset, and by night were once more at our "Shipwreck Camp." A little before reaching it we were overjoyed to find an old pack trail, a mere hollow beaten by the feet of mules a quarter of a century before, and now grown up with bushes, but a great bit of luck, for it probably meant a good road to the old mining camps at Big Bend.

If we could find the still older trail used by the voyageurs in portaging their furs from Boat Encampment to Athabasca Pass, we might camp at the foot of Mount Brown within a week, for it could not be more than sixty miles away. Our spirits rose as we went to bed, but sank again when we woke in the morning to find it raining hard and our blankets wet against the low cotton walls of the tent. The mountain slope outside was half in solution, so we crouched disconsolately in the little tent, just high enough to sit up beneath the ridge-pole, and prayed for a change of weather.

## CHAPTER XIII

### THE BIG BEND TRAIL

SOON after sunrise on the following morning the damp tent was folded and we followed the Big Bend trail, tramped by so many feet before, and were presently as wet from the bushes as we had been in the rapids ; but that did not matter, for the hot sun dried us and the rest of the world in an hour or two. The trail began attractively, but lost itself before long in an old *brulé*, grown up to a thicket so matted together that we had to part the saplings with our hands ; and for some hours we groped our way through a world made up only of fallen logs, little spruces, and sky. I wished heartily that we had gone on with the raft, but Frank had acquired a distaste for rafting.

Then came relief, where a recent fire had devoured the second growth as well as the old timber ; and here we were surprised to see the forest still burning higher up on the mountain-side, fire leaping from tree to tree and flaring up in pointed flames, roaring so that we could hear it half a mile away, then sinking to wavering columns of smoke. What had started the fire, and why had the rain not put it out?

## The Canadian Rockies

This last fire had not only cleared our way, but had licked up the trail itself, so that once lost it was hopeless to look for it, and we struck across to the green timber which had escaped in the lower ground. Soon we were treading softly on the mossy path under great spruces and cedars, cheerful, but quite shut away from the world ; but then the trail dipped to still lower ground along the river, swampy in the wetter parts, and full of giant ferns and devil's clubs, where we scrambled over or struggled round monster fallen cedars that rose above the mucky soil like ramparts.

Before evening we were out of the cedar swamp and halted by the river at the foot of a mountain of limestone, out of which gushed a full-fledged stream of the clearest water, fed by an underground channel from some distant valley. Its freedom lasted a hundred yards, and then it was lost in the turbid Columbia.

It was a charming camp ground with a beautiful view of the Selkirks opposite, and lulling sounds rose from the brook and river, while a squirrel and a chipmunk were merry and saucy neighbours ; but here misfortune overtook Frank, who became too unwell to travel and lay feverish and in pain under the wretched little tent, wet with frequent showers. He made no complaint, but must have pondered as to ways and means of reaching civilisation if he should grow worse.

On the third morning, however, he felt in good trim again, and once more we followed the whims and fancies of the reckless trail, this time push-

## The Big Bend Trail

ing over higher ground burnt almost bare, where, strangely enough for the Columbia Valley, we found no water until dusk in the evening. Then the trail entered a bit of heavy timber and plunged down a ravine dark as a cavern, where a crumbling log bridge crossed a little torrent pallid with haste and foam. We camped in the dark just beyond it, rolling logs against two trees by firelight to make a platform large enough for our bed. We had meant to bake at noon, but could not without water, and now had to hurry up a bannock before dinner could be served.

The ups and downs of the trail brought us on the sixth day to the head of Lake Kimbasket, where the Columbia feathers out into a delta of marshes and lagoons. After a mile or two of hill-side path with lovely views of the lake and mountains, our way led down once more into swampy forest, and at last stopped short among devil's clubs and reeds and rushes in front of a stealthily flowing river with no sign of a bridge.

Our camp was pitched at the foot of a great spruce on the driest spot to be found, and all night long the geese on the marshes kept up so loud a conversation that our sleep was badly interrupted.

It is probable that the goldminers ferried across at this point and that the trail goes on beyond the river; and again I longed in vain for the raft, which was probably aground in the reeds not far away. We tried our usual panacea for troubles of the trail next morning, and climbed the moun-

## The Canadian Rockies

tain behind us to have a look at the country. On the steep slopes we got enchanting glimpses of the lake and the distant mountains, but the summit was round-topped and covered with woods, so that we had no general view at all. It did not reach timber-line, which in this latitude is about seven thousand feet.

We must have climbed three thousand feet, but soon after the episode of the raft our aneroid had stopped work because of the rusting of its hair-spring, so that we could only guess at altitudes.

Disgustedly we swung down through the bushes and found to our dismay that we had missed the way, and only after an hour of searching did we find the little white tent among the devil's clubs at the foot of the spruce-tree.

With the few hours of daylight left we laboured through the bushes up stream, hoping to find a narrow part of the river where we could fell a tree as a bridge, but when darkness came the river, nameless on the maps, was as wide and marshy as ever, and we had to make a second gloomy camp beneath tall lichen-draped trees in an under-forest of alders and clubs that hid all the surroundings.

There was only one cheerful feature at this camp, a lively little stream of clear water which tumbled over the rocks beside us. At night, when the mosquitoes piped in millions outside the net which closed our small triangular door, and the wood-cock or some other eerie fowl piped mournfully now and then out of the darkness, it seemed as if







THE SELKIRKS NEAR LAKE KIMBASSET.

## The Big Bend Trail

the world of man was very far off, and as if stray humans had no business among the murky shadows of the forest.

With the morning came the end. In this sunless wilderness of green we took stock of our supplies and found not more than three days' provisions left, though we were only eleven days out and had put, as we reckoned, three weeks' provender in our packs. Our appetites had played us the usual trick of growing with the hard work. Probably less than twenty-five miles in a straight line from Mount Hooker we had to turn back without even seeing it. It was a bitter disappointment, but there was no help for it.

Frank put a bit of fire under the tent to dry it after the customary night's rain, and we changed our route, going back along the mountain-side so as to see the lake and the opposite ranges and escape the hateful devil's clubs. As our packs were now light I took some specimens of beautiful mica schist filled with gems, such as garnets and disthenes.

On the second day we baked the last of the flour into bread and boiled our last scrap of bacon; but another day brought us to Fountain Camp, where we had cached some supplies under a log beside the stream from the cavern, and we found that the squirrel and the chipmunk, our neighbours at the camp, were friendly and had respected the cache. We wasted no time on greetings but put the beans into our pot-of-all-work so as to get them boiled in good time, for

## The Canadian Rockies

beans are a luxury slow to cook, and we should want the pail for tea when dinner came. A remnant of rusty pork left at the cache was put in at the proper time, and the black lid of the pot as it swung on its pole over the fire was lifted oftener than was necessary so as to get a whiff of the delicious aroma. By the time the beans were done a big hot bannock had browned close to the fire, and a famous dinner was served by the firelight.

We were coming back beaten, but after all it was a pretty good world to live in, when it was not raining; and so we went to sleep contentedly to the drowsy music of the river and the brook.

Next day we made double time, since now we knew the trail and had not to spend hours looking for it, scrambling up steep hillsides, putting on our best speed in the shady green timber where the scotch-caps were ripening, scarcely slackening in the burnt ground where the fire we had seen on our way out was still smouldering in spite of the showers that had fallen, burrowing into the roots and under the logs. The very soil was turned to white ashes, and black trunks stood where there had been green trees.

Then came old forest spared by the fire, with a good trail once more, log bridges over streams, green shadows and golden sunshine and luscious huckleberries waiting to be picked.

In the middle of the afternoon we reached our Shipwreck Camp and carried off the strap which had held our packs so bravely in the rapids, after-

## The Big Bend Trail

wards crossing rolling plains covered with snake-berry bushes, now almost stripped of their fruit. A bear engaged in picking the bitter red berries was greatly startled, and scuffled off with as much crashing as an elephant.

Next was the promontory above our shipyard, where we paused a few minutes to look down on the eddy, the rocky island, and the foamy rapid. We passed the trapper's hut, and felt a faint revival of curiosity as we caught the gleam of bottles and marble near the rotten tent; and we flung down our packs and took a long drink at the trapper's bark spout before splashing up the oozy path through the alders, and coming out upon the familiar trail through the woods to the head of the rapids.

We were nearly home and promised ourselves a gorgeous supper with stewed prunes, and sugar in the tea, almost forgotten luxuries, as well as the inevitable bacon and bannock. We should also have a roomy tent where we could stand up to spread our blankets instead of crawling laboriously into the six-by-four shelter.

At last the river lay placidly before us above the falls and the tent showed pale in the twilight. We had left it trim and snug, but now it tilted drunkenly and had a yawning hole in its side. We rushed up, shocked at its condition and wondering what had gone wrong. Evidently we had not been at home to receive callers, most likely bears, and they had done some exploring in our absence. The mischief was done, however, more out of



## The Canadian Rockies

curiosity than malice ; for no burglar would have left our bags of flour and bacon untouched, so that it was after all only a friendly visit.

With the mosquitoes so active the large tent with the huge gap in its side was uninhabitable, and after a monumental supper we squirmed, feet foremost, into the tiny shelter tent once more.

We were well content to find that there was still plenty to eat, though Frank was not to be consoled for having missed a shot at the supposed grizzly who had done the wanton damage. Personally I was glad to have been absent at the time of the visit.

The next two days were devoted to repairs and luxurious idleness with unlimited berries for the picking, but no bears came within reach of Frank's rifle. A half-day was spent in the canoe exploring marshes and lagoons for geese, but without success, though the level meadows and sluggish waters reflecting mountains and woods were worth while as a contrast to the strenuous rivers and steep slopes and bushy tangles we had been struggling with for the last few weeks.

## CHAPTER XIV

### UP RIVER TO BEAVERMOUTH

ON August 17th our time was nearly up, and we started for Beavermouth. Everything was packed once more in bags, the supplies nearing their end, but the loss in weight quite made up with rock specimens, and we were once more under way. The twenty-five miles of journey down the river to the head of Surprise Rapids had been done in little more than one dreamy afternoon, since the river itself did all the work ; but we expected to need three days of hard pulling for the upward voyage.

In the expansion above the rapids we had little trouble, but our trials began where the river split into several "snys,"<sup>1</sup> or channels with a rapid current. Coming down we had chosen the middle of the widest, which proved very swift water, but we now took a smaller sny which seemed of a more placid disposition. It ran for a mile or two between banks densely wooded with immense trees, as solemn and silent a waterway as one could imagine, nothing but a harshly chattering kingfisher showing any sign of life. But for the silky

<sup>1</sup> Ottawa raftsmen call these channels "snys" = *chenai* in French.

## The Canadian Rockies

sheen of the water, with its tiny suspended particles of mica, one might have believed we were on a tributary and not the real Columbia; but light showed ahead and with it a stiff current which we conquered only on the second trial.

From this on we had to fight our way up stream by main force. When the "riffles" were too much for us Frank went ashore with the rope and towed as best he could round overhanging bushes and fallen trees, anchored by their roots, while their tops swung and threshed in the current outside.

At night we camped beside a lagoon, on whose soft shores all sorts of events were recorded. Geese, ducks, and snipe had wandered up and down, and a bear, perhaps scenting goose, had sunk his big footprints deep into the mud.

Our camp was away from the river, whose voice came only faintly, and the distant chatter of geese sounded homelike and peaceful; but the white and black of moonlight and shadow on the tent and perhaps a suggestion of the bear's footprints made sleep slow in coming. Then there was a sudden noise, and we woke with a start. Frank reached for his rifle and we went outside. He hoped and I feared that it was a bear; but nothing further happened.

Hardly were we asleep again when there was a loud splash as if some one had fallen into the water, and going out we fancied we could see circles on the surface of the lagoon and a dark head in the middle. It was probably a beaver logging in the moonlight. We heard other splashes after-

## Up River to Beavermouth

wards and wished the beaver would put off the rest of his work for another night.

There was nothing of moment on the second day except the sudden rising of a column of smoke on the mountain across the river as if a volcano had burst out. Dense volumes coiled and spread till the sun's face was covered and the clouds grew livid or lurid and a strange orange light tinted everything round us. Though the sun's light was greatly dimmed, its heat passed through the smoke undiminished.

Towards evening, while making a muddy portage past a pile of drift timber which we could not paddle round because of the heavy current, an unfamiliar sound smote our ears, the shriek of a railway whistle. Beavermouth, uglier than ever, was round the bend, and we should soon see men once more after six weeks with Nature.

We were not anxious to meet civilisation too soon, especially Old Uncle, who had warned us so faithfully, and waited out of sight on an island opposite the lumber piles, where we could patch our ragged clothing and make ready for the train next morning.

As it arrived early, we slipped ashore after dark, landing just behind the station, and slept for the last time in the little shelter tent. Then came our last portage of canoe and packs to the railway just in time for the train.

At Donald, twelve miles up the track, we got off with our outfit, and only the baggage-master recognised us, after looking us over from head

## The Canadian Rockies

to foot, and asked with a twinkle if we had climbed Mount Brown. In an hour we had shed our rags at the hotel, and next day I parted from Frank Stover, one of the most cheerful and loyal companions an explorer could have. Though he had been half-drowned in the rapids, had been tormented with sickness along the trail, and had missed his coveted grizzly, he was delighted with the journey, and never failed to joke over our disasters when we met in later years.

As for myself, we had not reached Mount Brown, which was a disappointment, but we had settled that a canoe was not the most desirable conveyance to Athabasca Pass; and beside this negative achievement we had made acquaintance with the wildest part of one of the most remarkable valleys in North America, the valley that separates the Rocky Mountains from the Selkirks and Gold Ranges. It runs almost straight north-west through the most mountainous region of British Columbia, with a length of at least 450 miles. Most great valleys are carved by a river flowing through from end to end; but here is a valley in which all the main rivers of British Columbia begin their course, no matter where they may close their career.

The Kootenay River follows the great valley for ninety miles to the south-east, then the Columbia begins in a small lake and flows for 180 miles to the north-west, before swinging south, round the Selkirk Mountains, to end in the Pacific. At the Big Bend of the Columbia its tributary,



## Up River to Beavermouth

Canoe River, joins it, after flowing fifty miles south-east through the same valley. Then comes the turn of Fraser River, which occupies it for 160 miles before turning south parallel to the Columbia and entering the Pacific at Vancouver. After a little uncertainty on the maps, Parsnip and Finlay Rivers, important tributaries of Peace River, use for three hundred miles a similar north-westerly valley, probably an extension of the one just described, and send their waters to Mackenzie River and the Arctic Ocean.

The two great mountain ranges separated by the valley are of very different ages, the Rockies being mere parvenus of post-cretaceous times, while the Selkirks are among the oldest ranges in North America and date back to the early Palæozoic.

The famous canyon of the Colorado, three hundred miles long and five thousand feet in depth, with a breadth of ten or fifteen miles, is out of the running as compared with the valley of the Upper Columbia at Surprise Rapids, which is more than eight thousand feet below the nearer Rockies and Selkirks, the opposite summits standing fifteen or twenty miles apart. Probably five times as many cubic miles of rock have been carved from this valley and disposed of as in the Colorado canyon.

Geologists have not finally settled the cause of this chasm, in which six large rivers have their head waters. In many places the rocks of the mountains on each side dip away from the valley, suggesting an anticline or upward fold, as though

## The Canadian Rockies

the strata had been so strained or ruptured that the rivers could easily carve their way downward. In others there is probably faulting ; but it must have been a singularly long and narrow strip of rock which lost its footing and slipped down to leave such an extraordinary depression.

Whatever the cause, this is the longest and most uniform valley between mountains in Canada.

## PART IV

### *TRAILS OF THE MOUNTAIN STONIES, 1892*

## CHAPTER XV

### THE EASTERN SIDE OF THE ROCKIES

OUR fiasco on the Columbia had shown that Mounts Brown and Hooker were not to be reached by canoe; but after that failure I was all the more eager to come to close quarters with the giants, and often considered ways of getting there. If the canoe was out of the question on the turbulent western rivers, the other means of locomotion was the pony, who, with patience and the aid of an axe, can navigate even the worst mountain valleys. I recalled my experiences of ponies on the Kicking Horse, the Columbia, and the Spillimacheen, and concluded that, though filled with the spirit of the Evil One, they could actually be induced to carry small loads in almost any direction through the mountains. The next expedition must travel with cayuses. If the camel is the "ship of the desert," the cayuse should be the "canoe of the mountains."

Palliser's map was carefully studied, and Milton and Cheadle's "North-west Passage by Land" was

## The Canadian Rockies

read with interest, and after consultation with my brother, Mr. L. Q. Coleman, a *ráncher* at Morley familiar with local conditions in the foot-hills, and Mr. L. B. Stewart, Professor of Surveying in the University of Toronto, who had done some work in the west, a Mount Brown expedition was organised on a more ambitious scale than the one which had canoed on the Columbia.

We added to our numbers Dr. Laird of Winnipeg, who was interested in mountains, and Mr. Pruyn, who knew something of horses and wished to join us as sportsman, assuring us that while travelling through the feeding-grounds of the big horn and goat his rifle would help out our larder.

Much of our journey toward Athabasca pass would be in the hunting-grounds of the Mountain Stony Indians, and my brother engaged two members of the tribe as guides, that we might not lose our way in that vaguely mapped region. He engaged two, since one alone among white men was sure to get homesick and desert. Our guides were Jimmy Jacob, sexton of the Mission Church on the Morley reserve, and Mark Two-young-men, a husky lad who was supposed to understand ponies.

Jimmy was a middle-aged and serious man who spoke Cree, of which my brother understood something, and also knew a few words of English; while Mark spoke nothing which any of us could understand, but had a graceful and extensive command of the sign language. When this did not meet the emergency Jimmy served as interpreter.

## The Eastern Side of the Rockies

Early in the summer of 1892 I went west to Morley in the foot-hills, where the party was to meet at the ranch. The serrated wall of the Rockies was before us, with here and there a "gap" where some larger river had cut its way through, giving an entrance to the interior of the mountain world. We expected to skirt the range for a time, then turn into one of the gaps and go from valley to valley, ending with Whirlpool River, which headed between the two longed-for mountains. Jimmy and Mark had covered two-thirds of the route; the other third we should have to choose for ourselves.

Though the Stonies had explored more of the mountains than any white man, it was hard to get any definite information from them. The Rev. John Macdougall and his brother David, the Indian trader, who knew the tribe well and could talk with them fluently, did their best for us, but gathered little that was certain, for the Indian writes no records, and makes no maps, and measures distances in the vaguest ways, by "sleeps," or in a pious tribe like the Stonies by "Sundays."

One man appeared to have almost reached the point we aimed for, Joby Beaver, the most enterprising hunter of the tribe, but he made too much money from furs and jerked meat to care to work for a white man; however, Jimmy was supposed to have gathered his ideas on the subject of routes, and it was hoped would find the way through the passes along Joby's trails.



## The Canadian Rockies

Our expedition to the fabulous mountains had aroused the greatest interest among whites and Indians, and there was a generous and most conflicting flood of suggestions, advice, and warnings reaching us from all quarters, some even foreboding disaster if we passed the known limits of the Stony world, for beyond this there were grave difficulties, including tribes of wicked Indians with whom one should not rashly come into contact. The judicious Jimmy would no doubt exert himself to ward off these dangers.

The Stonies were plain Indians in the beginning, a branch of the famous Sioux of the Western States, who followed the buffalo to the northern prairies ; but they were a small tribe and not equal in physique to the Blackfeet and other tribes that hunted the buffalo. In the many little battles between them the Stonies did not always come off best ; so, not much more than a century ago they took to the foot-hills and the mountains, most of them as hunters of the big horn and the goat, though a few hunted the moose and black-tailed deer in the boggy valleys among the foot-hills.

Mr. Rundle, a self-sacrificing missionary of the early days, gathered them under his paternal guidance, and most of the Mountain Stonies settled on their beautiful reserve at Morley ; but every summer they left their log houses and pitched their teepees in the Rockies. Each family had its own hunting-grounds, however, so that few were familiar with any wide stretch of the mountains.





INDIANS ON MORLEY RESERVE.

## The Eastern Side of the Rockies

The mountain sheep is now nearly exterminated, and even the goat is growing scarce, so that they are taking up cattle-raising and other occupations and go less and less into their old haunts. One may say that now there are no permanent inhabitants of the Rockies even in the summer.

We found them far from handsome as a race, though the children and boys and girls are often pretty; and they have nothing of the sombre reserve and dignity of Fennimore Cooper Indians. They are fond of a joke, and if you pass their teepees in the evening, lighted up by the wavering fire in the centre, you will probably hear a hymn sung with sweet, reedy voices, or chatter and laughter going on in the circle. They are good-hearted and honest, and have been known to ride miles after a white man to return some trifle left behind.

Our guides were shy at first, which was not strange from their lack of English, but they joined in the camp life as well as they knew how, though they proved less useful than we had expected, for we could not trust their cooking nor their skill as packers. As "lords of creation" they had always left such menial work to the women; so that we found them of most service in tracking strayed ponies and in following poorly-marked trails. Even in that, however, they showed no superhuman skill, but were quite equalled by a white man we employed the following year.

Flour and bacon and beans and tea had been bought from David Macdougall or from the store

## The Canadian Rockies

at the railway-station, and now all was bustle at the ranch, arranging pack-saddles and riding-saddles, putting supplies into bags to stand a rough journey, and finishing up odds and ends of equipment. Ropes of different sizes were cut up into sling-ropes and lash-ropes, canvas was arranged for pack-covers, and finally we were ready. Nothing must be forgotten, for nothing could be replaced during the next two months.

My brother had picked up ponies from the Indians at prices running from \$10 to \$25; and the "bunch" of thirteen which were to bear us and our burdens northward were scattered over the big pasture on the ranch ready for work, wiry little fellows with fine legs and feet and big heads. They were of all colours and patterns, blue, and black, and bay, and buckskin, as well as pinto (piebald), and none of us knew very much of their properties, though my brother and Pruyn had taken some lessons in packing and could "throw the rope" in the orthodox way so as to finish with the "diamond hitch" four square on the top of the pack.

On July 6th our party was assembled. Stewart and Laird had just arrived, while Pruyn had come some time before. Jimmy Jacob turned up early in the morning so as to get his breakfast. He felt the importance of his position as guide and was arrayed in his Sunday broadcloth, inherited from the missionary and befitting the office of sexton. His face was grave and determined. Mark was more frivolous and came in a blanket



## The Eastern Side of the Rockies

suit gay with trimmings and with fringes on the leggings. He had an eagle feather in his felt hat. They helped to corral the ponies and to pack on the off-side under the direction of Pruyn or my brother.

The saddles were cinched and the packing began, a process hard to learn and impossible to describe, but it went so slowly under our unpractised hands that one of the earlier ponies shook off his load before the last of the others was ready and had to be packed all over again. If the loads are not well balanced, they are bound to slip toward the heavier side.

It was almost evening before all was complete and we left the ranch, Jimmy riding ahead as if he owned the outfit, Mark coming in behind some of the pack animals but careful to keep within hail of Jimmy, and the rest of us following as we chose, a long-strung-out and disorderly procession moving slowly up the hills toward Ghost River. A few weeks before two parties coming from Calgary had been forced to camp one rainy night almost within sight of home on the wrong side of the ford of this treacherous little river, because rains in the mountains had swollen it so that wagons could not cross. To-day, however, we wound down the path over the cliffs of tilted sandstone and splashed through its pale bluish water with no trouble at all.

We climbed out of the narrow river bottom up the bare benches on the other side of the valley as the sun was setting, and soon after camped

## The Canadian Rockies

beside a little creek near a meadow of grass and pea-vines. It was time to camp, for some of the loads were ready to fall off; however, the first day is sure to go badly, and at any rate we had made a start.

Next day we followed the well-beaten Stony trail, where Jimmy knew every turn, and ford, and camp-ground, and halted between the hills at the Little Red Deer, where the Indians caught trout, and brought in an armful of "wild rhubarb," a hollow-stemmed plant that tasted more like celery than rhubarb.

Although Jimmy was quite at home on the trail, the region had never been mapped, and from this time on Stewart self-denyingly tramped the ten or twenty miles a day with his pedometer, taking bearings and sketching in the hills and streams, while occasionally to check the pedometer records he took the latitude with a sextant.

Next evening we camped at Fallen Timber Creek, of suggestive name, and a day or two later on the main Red Deer River, all the time among the foot-hills, with glimpses here and there of the range of mountains when there was time to look at them. Our real object in life seemed to be packing, repacking, unpacking, and driving refractory ponies when on the trail, or else cooking beans and bannocks round a smoky camp fire at night.

Pruyn had fallen sick, leaving the saddling and loading of the six pack ponies to my brother with help from the rest of us, who knew little of the

## The Eastern Side of the Rockies

art ; and those first days were sadly enlightening for some of our party who did not know the cayuse and his little ways. There was trouble in muskegs and fallen timber, and every one was disillusioned and disgusted and wondered why he had come into a world of so much tribulation and such poor scenery.

We could not even camp where we wished. There must first be feed for the ponies, and afterwards we might look for unessentials like wood and water for ourselves and a flat place for a tent. Scenery was quite an afterthought.

Before we ever reached the mountains we had grown familiar with every disaster that could happen to a pony. Two of us had been thrown, and several ponies had been mired in muskegs, from which they had to be dragged by head and tail to dry land ; but we were learning in a good school the art of "throwing the rope," so that loads stuck better than at first.

As we turned west toward the mountains we met an Indian family, the father, riding at the head of the cavalcade, calling *ombostage* (good-day) to us as he approached, and shaking hands with every one, while the women followed demurely with downcast eyes, whipping up the pack ponies. A young mother had a papoose slung in a blanket on her back, its round head bobbing as the pony trotted.

By this time Jimmy's clerical black coat had disappeared into the sack behind his saddle, and with the coat went most of his dignity. Camp

## The Canadian Rockies

was late that evening and dinner slow in cooking, and Jimmy standing near after the ponies had been hobbled laid his hand on his stomach and said, "Sick here." A rabbit which fell to Stewart's rifle was made ready for the pot by Jimmy in five minutes without a knife, starting at the hind legs with finger and thumb and stripping off skin and offal like a glove with a single motion.

Our five days in the foot-hills, besides teaching us much-needed lessons in the art of packing, gave glimpses of the strange history behind the hills themselves. Out on the "bald-headed" prairie, wherever a river cuts its valley, one sees the soft, cretaceous shales and sandstones lying as flat as when they were the sea bottom, many millions of years ago; but here they were bent and crumpled like so much brown paper, crushed and jostled into wave-crests in front of the mountains.

Now, following up the Red Deer Valley, we entered the portal of the mountains between huge blocks of Palæozoic limestone tilted up like floe ice piled on the wintry shore by a storm, the north-east end of the blocks riding on the contorted beds of the foot-hills. Seeing them so calm and immovable, it was hard to imagine the turmoil when irresistible forces from the Pacific drove them inland, thrusting them as mountain ridges out over the prairie and piling up the foot-hills in front.

The Red Deer Valley is 4,500 feet above the sea, and the outer ranges of mountains reach only eight thousand or nine thousand feet, so that they are not specially striking, except to one approach-



## The Eastern Side of the Rockies

ing them from the flatness of the plains. They are mostly bare of vegetation to the very bones, true "Rocky" mountains, standing up crude and hard in the pitilessly clear air of Alberta. We climbed one easily in an afternoon, following up the moderate south-western slope of the tilted block, and found no tangle of underbrush after leaving the valley and scarcely any snow on top, though some snowfields could be seen far up in the central ranges.

Less than seventy miles to the west Stover and I, four years ago, had climbed Surprise Mountain, 8,400 feet high, starting early in the morning in the hot valley of the Columbia at 2,400 feet, battling for hours with devil's clubs and alders on the lower slopes and rhododendrons higher up, and ending exhausted after a long day's climb by crossing a broad stretch of snowfield. On top we found ourselves in the midst of typical high Alpine scenery with *névé*-fields and glaciers reaching far into the valleys below us.

One could not imagine a greater contrast between two mountains of the same height under the same latitude. In the dry climate of the eastern ranges only a few feet of snow fall in the winter and this melts early under the summer's sun, while the upper valleys and slopes of the Selkirks are buried under thirty or forty feet of snow, full reservoirs to feed their innumerable glaciers during the hot months.



## CHAPTER XVI

### THROUGH THE MOUNTAINS TO THE SASKATCHEWAN

THE trail which Jimmy picked for us went a little way up the Red Deer to Mountain Park and then climbed out of the valley to a pass among the stunted timber at 6,500 feet, where it turned down again toward the Clear Water River, flowing through a parallel valley.

Another long day's journey took us over a higher pass, running through a fine knot of mountains, to the Atikoseepee, only a small creek, where we crossed at its head. With tired ponies after twenty-seven miles of travel we camped in this narrow, frigid valley from which the snow had just melted, leaving moist meadows for pasture. We were so close to timber-line that poles for the tent were hard to find, and only gnarled little tree-trunks could be got for the fire so much needed in the nipping air.

In the morning we started through the splashy meadows in a flurry of snow, crossed a pass well above the trees (7,500 feet), and entered the valley of White Rabbit Creek, which falls three thousand

## To the Saskatchewan

feet in its race of fifteen miles to the Saskatchewan. The whole valley of this foamy torrent is covered with muskeg or forest without pasture, forcing us to travel steadily for thirty miles, till we reached grass and water on the Kootenay plains at 7.25 in the evening and flung the loads and saddles on the turf.

Toward evening the wearied ponies tried our temper sorely, tearing their packs against snags or dashing off the trail for a bunch of grass, getting tangled among the trees. Little Bay thought his load of flour too heavy and quietly lay down several times, when he had to be helped up and repacked. Before he was put in order some other beast was sure to be in trouble.

Our trials were not over yet ; for Stewart, who was faithfully walking to record the distance with his pedometer, did not turn up for dinner ; and Laird and I, going back in the darkness, found him three miles up the trail, limping slowly along with a sprained knee which must have cost him misery among the fallen timber.

We had longed for the mountains during the dull journey through the foot-hills from Morley ; but after snowstorms and stony passes above timber-line we were inconsistent enough to find it delightful to come down to this inlet of prairie in the heart of the mountains, where Stewart's lameness and the sore backs of some of the ponies after fifty-seven miles of heavy travel in the last two days made a welcome excuse for a holiday.

The Saskatchewan is so much more powerful

## The Canadian Rockies

than the other eastward-flowing rivers that no mere gap like that of the Red Deer or Clearwater serves its purpose, and it has carved itself a flat valley four or five miles wide through the outer ranges. The warm and dry Chinook winds sweep down from the passes to the west, licking up the snow in winter and giving the plains the semi-arid look of the ranch country. When we came down from White Rabbit Creek on July 16th our ponies trod upon pungent sage and wormwood, with their silvery greens, as well as the bunch grass and peavine; and flax and harebells and gentians and yellow sunflowers with brown centres bloomed everywhere as flowers of summer.

There was another interesting change on the way toward the Kootenay plains, for the tilted blocks or "writing-desks" of the Red Deer and Clearwater gave place to folded mountains elaborately cut into shark's teeth; and straight ahead, jutting boldly out into the belt of prairie, stood a beautiful mountain nine thousand feet high, bent into a fold like an **S**, two miles long and a mile broad, tipped on its side. It can be seen from all the valleys looking into the plains, and we named it Sentinel Mountain.

After two days' halt, Jimmy Jacob led the way down stream to ford the Saskatchewan, where it was weakened by splitting into six branches with gravel bars between. Even so divided it was deep enough for us and reached the saddles on the horses' backs, so that most of us pulled off boots and socks and let the wooden stirrups float beside





LOOKING UP LITTLE FORKS OF SASKATCHEWAN. MOUNT MURCHISON TO RIGHT.



## To the Saskatchewan

us. The water was muddy and the current strong, though steady and not dangerous.

Two or three miles beyond we forded the Hahaseegee Wapta, or Cataract River, as one may translate the Stony name, much smaller, with clear blue-green water, but flowing far more swiftly over rounded boulders on which the ponies lurched and slipped, while the foam dashed against the seat of the saddle on the up-stream side. One had all the sensations of pitching and rolling at sea in a very small canoe, so that it was a decided relief when the pony stumbled into shallow water on the other side.

To get a view of the valley we climbed Triangle Peak, a kneelike fold of rock rising 2,600 feet above the river, scrambling over limestones filled with corals and other fossils in the lower part and ending with quartzite and conglomerate on top. The Kootenay plains and the Saskatchewan were spread out below us, and higher mountains rose everywhere around except toward the north-east, where the greyish-green plains melted into the hazy distance of the outer prairie.

From every mountain valley creeks and rivers were hurrying to join the Saskatchewan, the largest of them being the Cataract River at our feet, bringing the waters of two thousand square miles of mountain and snowfield to fill the great river before it began its journey across the prairies to Winnipeg.

The Saskatchewan is greater than all its subordinate streams, the Red Deer, the Clearwater,

## The Canadian Rockies

and the Brazeau, put together, because it has cut farther into the Rockies, gathering up the drainage of the snowy central ranges behind them to the south-east and the north-west.

A beautiful small lake and white salt licks broke the surface of prairie below us, and looking down on our specks of ponies, we could imagine the brown herds of buffalo drinking at the pond or streaming toward the salt lick, where the hunters lay in wait for them. One could still see their hollow paths and wallows and an occasional whitened skull in 1892.

The Kootenay plains were once in a small way the high-road of nations, and full of picturesque life, when the Kootenay tribe from southern British Columbia came across Howse Pass at one of the head streams of the Saskatchewan to hunt the buffalo and trade horses with the Stonies. That traffic ended many years ago, and Howse Pass is now seldom crossed by white men and never by the Indians; but the plains are still lively once a year when the Stonies come north from Morley before scattering into their special hunting-grounds.

Jimmy had travelled no farther than this, and now Mark was to take the lead, but we had very little idea what his plans were. We expected to keep on through the mountains to the Brazeau River.

## CHAPTER XVII

### FROM THE SASKATCHEWAN TO THE SUNWAPTA

THE ponies had strayed far on the prairies and had to be tracked up to their feeding-grounds, and when they were brought in proved to be in altogether too good spirits, so that we started after a long delay with Mark Two-young-men riding jauntily ahead.

Instead of turning up one of the valleys, as we had hoped, he followed the Saskatchewan down, and passing the edge of the mountains, turned northwards along a wooded valley in the foot-hills. With the foot-hills came bad trail, for there were muskegs and soft ground along the creek and windfalls among the pine-groves to traverse.

Before long Mark crossed the creek in such a bad place that Pinto rolled backwards under his load of 200 lb. of flour and lay struggling in the water, where we had to unpack him as he lay. The trail was fairly well marked, and in my capacity of *ogema* (chief) I deposed Mark from the leadership and sent Jimmy ahead once more. Mark dropped back crestfallen to his old position as driver of pack-horses, and before long I heard

## The Canadian Rockies

his tin whistle going plaintively as he consoled himself for the disgrace.

The next day's journey was not without interest, for at one place there were three coal seams, which have since turned out to be very valuable ; and later, travelling along the edge of a canyon, we came upon a beautiful waterfall leaping into an amphitheatre, far better scenery than we had been used to in the foot-hills.

On the second day, however, we rose nearly one thousand feet to bare moorlands threaded with interminable boggy creeks between the wooded hills, where among low bushes of the "grease-wood" we met no end of minor disasters, for ponies are at their worst under these conditions. Several were mired, and one of them ran amok, charging back along the narrow trail, tearing his own and others' packs to pieces and flinging Laird from his saddle. Laird was so shaken and bruised by the fall that he was put out of trim for climbing during the rest of the journey. Pruyn, too, was on the sick list and in doubt whether he should go on.

On the third day we reached Brazeau River, and it was plain that our present route would never lead to Athabasca Pass, so we decided to take the direction into our own hands. Though not so good at picking up trails, we knew at least which way we wanted to go, and turned up the Brazeau Valley into the Rockies once more. Later we found that there were at least two passes through the mountains between the Saskatchewan and the Brazeau, which would have saved forty miles of distance and two days of horrible trails.







CAMP IN THE BRAZEAU VALLEY.

## From the Saskatchewan to the Sunwapta

The Brazeau Gap opens up a splendid set of peaks, and we were charmed to push south-westward up its wide valley against a blustering Chinook wind that sometimes set the spruce-woods roaring. Five miles within the mountains we halted for Sunday. The valley is much higher than the Kootenay plains, and our camp was at 5,400 feet.

We were once more among tilted blocks of limestone, often fairly high; one we climbed reaching 9,450 feet and giving an inspiring view up the valley till a snowstorm sent us down. There was hardly any permanent snow on it, however, though a mountain as high as this in the Selkirks would have been buried under at least 1,500 feet of *névé*, sending two or three glaciers down into the valleys.

The snowstorm followed us to our camp behind its protecting clump of spruces, and to add to our troubles Pruyn had become seriously sick. It was evident that he ought not to stay in the mountains, so next morning my brother and Jimmy with the strongest riding and pack-horses set off with him for a forced march to Morley, taking a route through the mountains of which Jimmy had heard. Pruyn could hardly sit on his horse as they rode off toward the south through driving sleet, beginning a journey of 150 miles over very rough trails, and the outlook was not cheerful. However, all went well, and two weeks later my brother and Jimmy turned up again, tired but none the worse for their three hundred miles of travel.

The rest of us, Stewart, Laird, and I, with Mark

## The Canadian Rockies

as horsekeeper, explored the valley and climbed near-by mountains, moving our camp only a few miles up toward the forks of the Brazeau.

Mark was disconsolate without Jimmy, and the mournful strains of his tin whistle beside the camp fire at night were full of pathos. The other party had taken the small tent used by the Indians, so that he was homeless, sleeping at the foot of our tent in bad weather, but preferring to curl up outside under a tree in his thick Hudson Bay blanket if the night was fine. We sent him into the mountains hunting with Pruyn's rifle, but his only game was a badger, which he singed over the fire and then boiled. The meat was not bad, though we had to add salt, which Mark had not found necessary.

After Jimmy went away our conversations with Mark were short and mostly in the sign language, though he had begun to learn a little English. For horses trotting there was a quick motion of the hand with the fingers pointing downward, for walking a slow motion ; a teepee was suggested by the fingers meeting in an upward position, and time we expressed by pointing to the sun and then to its place in the sky at the hour intended.

After the cold and snow flurries there were two or three intensely hot days which brought out the bulldog flies in full force, driving the ponies crazy, and though we made them a smudge of their own, they crowded round our camp fire till we had to fence them off. Each one wanted to stand behind another's tail, which whisked the flies from his



## From the Saskatchewan to the Sunwapta

face, and presently they were racing madly round after one another. Poor old Pinto was hard to catch, so that we left a rope trailing from his neck, and in the race the following pony was apt to step on it and snub him up short. Before evening his back was covered with blood from the bites.

It was hard to believe that snow had been falling a day or two before as we took shelter from the broiling sun under the spruces.

Then came a rainy day when bulldogs ceased and the horses deserted us, and an insignificant rill on the cliffs to the north was transformed into a magnificent waterfall. Now the mosquitoes took their turn as tormentors, and some of the ponies came up and stood sedately in the lee of the fire.

On August 1st we moved ten miles up the valley over the usual muskegs, rocks, and fallen timber, with a wall of cliff rising half a mile above us for part of the way. Next day Stewart and I climbed a mountain 9,500 feet high just above the forks of the Brazeau and with the whole valley in sight, while to the west there rose a spotless dome of snow twenty or twenty-five miles away, probably the Dome shown on Collie's map as the central point of the Columbia icefield. Another high point farther north we thought might be the longed-for Mount Hooker.

Our new camp had been used by the Stonies before us, and teepee poles leaned against a cliff a little way off, and hacked skulls and horns of sheep, some of them immense, were lying near the old camp fire. This must have been a great

## The Canadian Rockies

centre for sheep. Their paths run along all the mountain-sides, beginning and ending without apparent cause, and their droppings behind sheltering rows of bushes near timber-line are as thick as in a barnyard, but we did not see a single sheep. They had been completely killed off or scared away.

Mark astonished us one day by his extensive command of English. He actually asked, "Morley, how many Sunday?" and his countenance fell when I held up four fingers, for he was very homesick. He wanted us to turn back, and pulled some spindling blades of grass at his feet, then pointed across the mountains and used his only familiar English phrase, "No good."

To keep him busy he was sent sheep-hunting again, and did not come home till the second night, so that we began to wonder if he had not gone to meet Jimmy, who was expected back along with my brother. After dark we heard voices and neighings and went out of the tent expecting to see Lucius and Jimmy, but saw Mark and a younger lad. We called them into the tent, and Mark introduced the stranger as "Joby's papoose, Shamosin." When the fire was stirred up we saw that he was a bright, pretty boy with a laughing face, and that Mark had on a new pair of blanket leggings which he had long needed. Evidently he had found his way to the camp of Job Beaver, the famous hunter, instead of going after sheep himself.

Shamosin explained by signs that his father had



## From the Saskatchewan to the Sunwapta

shot many sheep, bending down finger after finger to count them and ending by opening both hands explosively four times, meaning forty sheep. Evidently Beaver was doing in that valley what had been done in this. We had now got ready a sumptuous supper of dried peaches, bannock, and tea for all hands, a most picturesque party by the firelight under the spruces ; and Mark showed that the name " Two-young-men " was well deserved at mealtimes if not on other occasions. He begged the teapot with its old tea-leaves to brew a second time, and we heard them talking and laughing in their nook under the trees. Next morning we had a fine breakfast, for Shamosin had brought some ribs of sheep, dry and dirty-looking, but tasting delicious when boiled with fat pork in the beanpot. Before going the boy wanted to exchange meat for tea and flour, and we gave him some tea, but could not spare flour. Then he mounted his pinto horse, promising, for a dollar, to come back with two legs of sheep ; but he failed to come before we left our camp on the Brazeau.

On August 8th we tramped to the headwaters of the south branch of the river, following it up for eighteen miles, where several small streams tumble down from glaciers in the mountains behind. Our tramp covered every variety of ground—mossy trail through spruce-woods, old windfalls on burnt ground, rugged outcrops of limestone, canyons with waterfalls and rapids to climb into and out of, and rivers to ford on foot.

On the 10th, as we set out for an expedition,

## The Canadian Rockies

my brother Lucius and Jimmy surprised us by coming down the Brazeau Valley instead of up, for they had gone one way through the mountains and come back another. Later the whole party used both these passes. Pruyn had been taken safely to Morley and was no worse, so that all had gone well, and we turned joyfully back to camp to make a fresh start for Mount Brown.

Stewart and I had looked over the ground and picked out a trail, so that there should be no loss of time, and in two or three hours the strayed ponies were brought in and we left our most permanent camp, not sorry to be under way again.

The trail chosen followed the main Brazeau River to Brazeau Lake, which reflected a great glacier to the north-west, then took the south shore for two or three miles, and turned south-west up a very steep and rugged little valley between towering cliffs toward a pass we had seen on one of our climbs. Heavy rain caught us on steep ground just below timber-line, and we chopped away the thick branches of a spruce to make room for our tent, giving a picturesque but inconvenient camp with wonderful views between the thunder-clouds of Brazeau Lake a thousand feet below and the mountains beyond.

Crossing the barren pass next morning, we followed a creek flowing north-west toward a wide river valley which we had looked at longingly from a mountain-top some days before. We named the pass and creek Poboktan, from the big owls that blinked at us from the spruce trees, and we camped

## From the Saskatchewan to the Sunwapta

a little way down the valley at 6,800 feet. We were full of curiosity as to the river we were heading for. Could it be the Whirlpool, and was our journey nearly ended?

Going on next day, we passed down the steep Poboktan gorge from stubby tree-line timber to tall and slender pines and spruces in a wide, unknown valley at 5,300 feet.

The new river was muddy though the weather was fine, so that there must be glaciers at its head, and in size it was nearly as large as the Bow at Morley; but it came from the north-west instead of the north-east, so that it could not be the Whirlpool. On the other hand, it seemed too small for the Athabasca, and we decided to keep the Stony name, Sunwapta, at least for the present. Where to go next was the problem. From a mountain-top near by we could look up the valley to a striking group of snowy peaks with a score of glaciers and a half-dozen blue-green lakes in the valleys beneath them, while down stream we could follow the Sunwapta for many miles to its junction with another river, perhaps the Whirlpool. If so, Athabasca Pass was somewhere to the south-west across the range of mountains between the two rivers, though no monster peaks like Hooker and Brown could be seen in that direction. Perhaps the nearer range cut them off from us. It was decided to go down to the forks and follow up the other valley.

After breakfast next morning Jimmy and Mark, instead of going for the horses, came up with

## The Canadian Rockies

solemn faces and shook hands, after which Jimmy remarked, "Goodbye, we go Morley." This unknown country might do for white men, but it evidently did not suit Mountain Stonies. As *ogema*, I told Jimmy, "You go Morley, you go Calgary Gaol," and tried to make him understand that if they broke the contract which they had signed with their mark they could expect no pay, and that we were only going a few days farther anyway.

They went to their tent to consult, and in a few minutes Jimmy came and touched my arm, saying, "*Meewahsin*" ("good"), and pointing down the river. The mutiny was over.

By night we had covered fifteen miles and camped within three or four miles of the forks; but the latter part of the way had been through burnt woods with terrible windfalls that meant heavy chopping; so before saddling up in the morning we set out with axes to cut a trail to the forks, and on the way discovered a canyon with some fine waterfalls on the main river. After chopping most of the day it began to look hopeless to get the ponies through in any reasonable time, and we decided on August 17th that the three able-bodied men, Stewart, my brother, and I, should follow up the supposed Whirlpool River on foot.

It took some time to arrange pack-sacks and get everything ready, so that it was toward evening before we started, fording the Sunwapta on horseback and driving the animals back across the river to join the others.

## CHAPTER XVIII

### THE TRAMP TO FORTRESS LAKE

SHOULDERING our packs, which weighed 40 lb. or 50 lb. each, we began our tramp across the low ridge between the two rivers over a *brulé* grown up with young trees, which were always snatching at our burdens. Toward dusk we came out upon the black and barren shore of the other river, where a second fire had swept everything away except the stony and gravelly soil. A few young willows starting again we cut for our bed and a few blackened stumps fed our fire, and then we slept under the stars and driving clouds.

In the morning we found ourselves beside a large river, apparently in flood, its grey, muddy water covering the grass along shore ; and across the valley there were fine, cathedral-shaped mountains draped with clouds, one with a cross of snow in the ravines near its summit. The river was split into several channels at this point, but farther up the valley we found it flowing as a single stream, so we rafted across and then pulled the heavy logs well up on the shore for use on the way back.

Presently we reached a tributary coming down



## The Canadian Rockies

from more nearly the right direction, so we left the main valley for this. As there were endless beaver dams and trees cut by beaver along its course, we named it Chaba River, from the Stony word for beaver.

On the third night, which was frosty, we camped under a spruce, near the foot of a splendid square-based mountain built of thick courses of purple quartzite. During the night we were disturbed by a moose or large deer that walked crunching up the gravel and trotted away splashing across the creek when we got up to look at it.

The morning was brilliant, and we left our bundles under the tree to climb a few thousand feet for an outlook. Fortress Mountain, as we named it, proved a harder proposition than we expected, and at 7,700 feet we halted at the foot of a vertical wall, with the valley and its creeks and rivers spread out more than three thousand feet below, and a grand array of mountains near its head a few miles to the south, the finest of which we afterwards called Mount Quincy.

Fortress Mountain has since been climbed by Barrett, Wilcox's partner, who determined its height as 9,600 feet.

Rounding the corner of the great buttress, whose foot we followed, suddenly there opened out below us the most marvellous lake imaginable. We were above its east end, and could see it stretching eight or ten miles to the west in a valley completely surrounded by heavy forest, sloping up to purplish cliffs and mountain-tops with



FORTRESS MOUNT.



## The Tramp to Fortress Lake

snow and glaciers. The water was turquoise blue, shading round the edges into green, and a creek entered it from a glacier on the other side, forming a delta and sending out two plumelike currents of milky water that almost reached our shore. Forest and glaciers and mountains were perfectly reflected in the lake.

Our hearts fairly stood still at the sight, for surely this must be the Committee's Punch Powl on Athabasca Pass, and the tall, snowy peak behind the glacier to the south must be Mount Hooker. It was one of the great moments of a lifetime!

We scrambled down over the talus of rough quartzite blocks, quite unmindful of bruised shins, halted for a feast of raspberries, gooseberries, black currants, and huckleberries on the lower slopes as an antidote to a steady diet of pork and beans, and reached the tree by the creek triumphant. By the camp fire that evening our triumph was a little dimmed, however, for we could not make the Punch Bowl of the map fit in size or shape with the lake we had discovered.

Next day was Sunday, but we shouldered our packs, trudging up stream toward the lake to settle the question finally, and noticed that the plant growth around us was more luxuriant than it had been, while the berries were endless on the snow slides, all suggesting British Columbia. In an hour the clear creek we followed took its rise in marshy springs at the foot of a little ridge covered with trees, and beyond was the glorious lake, where we dropped our loads on a pile of driftwood under

## The Canadian Rockies

an immense spruce which overhung the water. Close by a small stream flowed out of the lake and disappeared under the ridge we had just crossed, no doubt through the blocks of an old moraine. The springs on the other side must come from this source.

We then started along the north shore of the lake in search of a possible Mount Brown, picking up a vague path here and there which might be an Indian trail or that of the old North-West Company's voyageurs. Coming to a stream, we followed it two or three miles to its head and climbed the mountain above to fix our position if possible.

The climb was heavy, but when we reached the top, at 8,500 feet, rather used up after our recent strenuous work, we found ourselves more than four thousand feet above the lake and just opposite the delta on the other side. Stewart sat down to sketch the lake and its surroundings, helping himself by the clinometer, and my brother and I looked up the valley and to the north for some great peak that might be Mount Brown, but the mountains in that direction did not rise more than one thousand or two thousand feet above us, while Mount Brown should be almost double our height.

The white pyramid beyond the glacier to the south came nearer to the proper height of Mount Hooker, and yet probably reached no more than twelve thousand feet. The main outlet of the lake was clearly westwards, and the river flowing from



## The Tramp to Fortress Lake

it must be fairly large, for several creeks flowed into it.

We could look east toward Fortress Mountain, which was much higher than this peak, and south-east toward Mount Quincy, which was still higher, but the headwaters of the Chaba and of the Athabasca were hidden by nearer mountains. Nothing was finally settled as we toiled downwards over rough quartzite cliffs and loose blocks, and it was so dark when we reached the lake that we could not follow the route picked out in the morning and stumbled over rocks and through bushes to our camp near the mysterious outlet under the spruce.

We were cross as we lit a fire and made supper, and all sorts of doubts troubled us as to our position. It was pretty certain that the lake we were on could not be the Committee's Punch Bowl, so we decided to call it Fortress Lake, after the fine mountain on its shore.

But where were Mounts Brown and Hooker? Had we passed them somewhere in the group of snowy peaks to the south? That did not seem possible, for we should certainly have seen any point reaching fifteen thousand feet, rising head and shoulders over the mountains around us, which we believed to be not more than twelve thousand feet. On the other hand, we had looked in vain to the northwards, where all the mountains were decidedly lower, so that it was a complete puzzle. We came to the conclusion that the whole arrangement of mountains, rivers, and lakes could not

## The Canadian Rockies

be made to fit with the map, and that probably Fortress Lake and its surroundings had never before been seen by a white man.

We went to sleep discouraged, but when we woke next morning and saw glorious, sun-lighted peaks under a cloudless sky reflected in the perfect mirror of Fortress Lake we revived again. A flock of ducks swam into the bay and rippled the water, spoiling the reflection, and at last the sun struck our camp under the big spruce, and we got up, filled with the wonder and charm of the scene. This lake was certainly worth discovering. It was undoubtedly made during the Ice Age when a glacier filled the valley and dumped across its former outlet the moraine behind us, so that when the ice melted the water had to flow toward the Columbia instead of the Athabasca. On our climb yesterday we had found the lower part of the mountain slopes planed and scoured by ice except where covered with moraines.

Now, however, the climate was by no means glacial, but was warmer than anything we had encountered, making a striking contrast with the high passes and valleys we had been travelling through. The lake is only 4,300 feet above the sea with a broad opening of the valley toward the west, so that a splendid forest grows round the shores, chiefly spruce and pine and cedar, 100 or 150 feet high and three or four feet through at the butt; and there is a rank lower growth of tangled bushes, including the unlovely devil's club. We were certainly in British Columbia.





THE PYRAMID BEYOND MISTY MOUNT.



MISTY MOUNT AND GLACIER.

## The Tramp to Fortress Lake

After breakfast we built a raft of drift timber and paddled westwards on a voyage of discovery, making by hard work only about a mile and a half an hour, but solaced by the marvellous views of valleys running up to glaciers among the mountains. Our progress was so slow that we landed at the delta instead of going on to the end of the lake, and camped as usual under a tree.

On August 23rd we set out for the Pyramid Mountain, caching half of our provisions, and following up the torrent which built the delta. The going was bad, through woods which snatched at one with hooks and talons, and over slopes of sliding blocks of limestone, till we rose to the foot of the glacier from which the torrent gushed, where we stayed a night with poor shelter from a thunderstorm that echoed down the valley.

In the morning we climbed without difficulty the moraine-covered end of the glacier, and presently got upon the ice, which had looked all right from the mountain across Fortress Lake, but turned out to be crossed by fearful crevasses, among which we zig-zagged upwards. We had to cut steps for several hundred feet, and were cornered at one place on a narrow ridge between two crevasses. Stewart cut a few steps down and then jumped across a blue chasm several feet wide, while my brother and I braced ourselves with the rope and held our breath. He did not slip, as I feared he might, and cut some steps on the other side so that we could cross more easily. I must confess to a tremulous feeling as I made the jump.



## The Canadian Rockies

Finding the crevasses troublesome, we turned to the cliff on the north wall of the valley, but the rocks were steep and slippery, especially after it began to rain, and we went back to the glacier, keeping along its edge to avoid the seracs near the centre, until at length we got above snow-line and made better progress by kicking in our feet on the steep slope.

By this time the rain had turned to sleet, climbing became miserable, and there was nothing to be seen except dim black and white forms here and there appearing in the whirling snow. All at once we found ourselves on the edge of a tremendous cliff with a valley beyond, out of which came the noise of a torrent.

The aneroids showed 9,900 feet, and we halted for some time, eating our lunch and hoping the clouds would break and give us a sight of the snowy pyramid which we thought might be Mount Hooker ; but after shivering for half an hour we gave it up and turned back.

Down the snow slope we made better time, and presently got below the clouds, where we could pick our way more certainly. We crossed the glacier to the east side, where there was a bit of woods sheltered by rocks at 6,640 feet, and camped under three matted spruces. It was cold, but the rain was over and we made a good fire, and finally snuggled into a sort of bear's den at the foot of the trees under the thick branches, where we slept very comfortably.

A brilliant morning followed, and instead of

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going back to Fortress Lake as had been determined the night before, we retraced our old footsteps up the *névé*, and in less than three hours had reached the edge of the cliff where we had halted in the snowstorm. It was some distance below the top of the mountain, and there was stiff rock-climbing up cliffs of vertical limestone before we got to the summit, at 10,050 feet.

It was now clear that the peak we had thought of as Mount Hooker did not join the mountain we were on, Misty Mountain as we named it; but that there was a steep wall of cliff below us and a somewhat deep valley before the foot of the pyramid could be reached. Its top was probably two thousand feet above us and three or four miles away, and it seemed very isolated, so that we had to forego any attempt at climbing it, since our supplies were low.

Misty Mountain was the highest point climbed during our tramp, and from the top of its limestone cliffs gave a marvellous survey of the region. We could look back on Fortress Lake and the mountains around it; and to the south and west in blue spaces, partly cloud-filled, on each side of the white Pyramid there were far-distant peaks, probably of the Selkirks across Columbia River. The Columbia itself was not visible, though the great river could not be more than ten miles away; and at this point, near the Big Bend, where it turns south round the Selkirk Mountains, it must have been more than seven thousand feet below us.

Looked at from the deep Columbia Valley, our

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neighbour, the Pyramid, must rise more than nine thousand feet above the forest at its base, and must present one of the finest mountain views in the Rockies. Thus far this splendid peak has never been seen, or at least has never been described, from the Columbia side, and has never been approached by a white man except on our climb of Misty Mountain.

The Grand Trunk Pacific will pass within fifty miles of it in a year or two, so that it can then be reached without too much trouble by a properly equipped party.

It is probable that the Pyramid is the snowy peak triangulated by Wilcox from Fortress Lake, several years after our visit, but he makes its altitude only 10,500 feet. This must be decidedly a mistake, for Misty Mountain, as shown by two aneroids checked by a boiling-point reading, reaches above ten thousand feet, and the Pyramid we estimated to rise two thousand feet above us.

Wilcox himself thought it higher, and was disappointed when his calculations brought it down to the figure he gives; and Jean Habel, an experienced Old World mountaineer who saw it from the lake some time later, says of it: "Nearly due west stands a very prominent snowy mountain, in shape similar to Mont Blanc," and adds that it appears higher than the 10,500 feet mentioned by Wilcox.

Our closer view of the mountain suggests decidedly steeper slopes than those of Mont Blanc, at least from some points of view. We were con-

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vinced from its position beyond the watershed toward the Columbia River that this fine peak could not be Mount Hooker, and remained as mystified as ever in regard to the two great mountains beside Athabasca Pass. From the top of Misty Mountain, with clear skies we could see fully fifty miles to the north and north-west, far beyond the position of the pass on the map, and nothing even as high as the peaks round Fortress Lake showed itself. What had become of the giants?

Going back to the three spruces we passed beds of snow red with *protococcus nivalis*, and saw black glacier fleas all alive in the sunshine. It was a delightful day, full of vivid colours, the sky dark ultramarine, the snow yellow-white in the sun and blue in the shadow, and the rocks ruddy brown and bluish grey. Lower down where the glacier was bare of snow all the rills and pools on the melting ice were like indigo with the reflection of the sky, and our nook of forest at camp seemed of a darker and more intense green than any other forest. The slopes to the left and above the patch of woods had every possible rich tint of flowers and sedges and mosses. It was a wonderfully coloured world on Misty Mountain when the sun shone.

On the downward journey we chose an easier route and escaped most of the crevasses, so that after a gorgeous evening glow had faded from the mountains beyond Fortress Lake we reached the delta when darkness was falling and picked out a better spruce for shelter than the last one.

We intended to raft to the outlet of the lake next



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morning, but thunder-squalls and downpours of rain began in the night and kept us prisoners under the big spruce most of the day. Fortunately it made a good roof, not at all leaky, so that we did not need to get wet.

Sitting chilly under a tree with no view of the splendid mountains, but only the dripping bushes beside us on the gravelly floor of the delta, there was time to ponder over many things. Our supplies were nearly out, for with the rush of hard work we had, as usual, eaten more than had been expected, and to-morrow we must go back to the main camp and begin the homeward journey. The time lost in sending Pruyn out to Morley made any fresh move impossible this summer, since it was now August 26th, and Stewart and I had to be at home in the east before the end of September; so that the second expedition in search of Mount Brown and Mount Hooker must end without a sight of either of the great mountains!

Conditions were rather depressing there in the grey of pouring rain under the dripping trees by Fortress Lake, as we held a gloomy council, a trio of ragged, unshaven men with boots nearly torn to pieces by the struggle up and down Misty Mountain. The only conclusion reached was that we must try again next summer.

Towards evening we paddled back to our camp near the mysterious stream at the head of the lake and baked our flour into bannocks for the homeward rush which was to begin in the morning. By strenuous marching we hoped to reach the main



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camp in one day, since we knew the road and our loads were now greatly lightened.

In the morning early the rain was over, and we could see the spiry spruces reflected in the water, and beyond them to the east the lower towers of Mount Quincy, with their well-built horizontal courses of dark quartzite, and the blue lower end of its main glacier; but the tops of the mountains were shrouded with mists and the whole valley was roofed with cloud.

The beans were warmed, the tea steeped, and bacon fried. Breakfast was ready. It was soon eaten and we said "goodbye" to Fortress Lake, plunging through the soaked bushes up the low ridge to the rear of the camp, sinking to the ankles in the spongy muskeg where the springs came out, and then making our way along the gravelly flats of the creek toward its junction with Chaba River.

Each of the three in turn took the lead for an hour, as we had been doing all through the excursion. Lucius was guide for the first hour, toward the end of which we passed our old camp under a tree near the foot of Fortress Mountain, towering gloomily above to the north, its top lost in mists. It seemed homelike enough to us wanderers as we rested for a few minutes, and recalled the moose that had broken our slumbers that night by tramping past us over the gravel.

Then Stewart went ahead, plunging into streams and bayous in his hurry to get on. We forded creeks up to the knees, slashed across old beaver dams with the water running over them, sank deep

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into the moss under dank evergreen woods, and then the hour was up.

My hour was mostly spent close to the edge of the creek, where the drainage is best, through muskegs and marshes. On a mud bank there were fresh footprints of a bear. Then the Chaba joined the main Athabasca River, and we struck across burnt woods to cut off a bend and came out on the shore where our raft logs had been pulled up safely above the water.

Soon the six logs were rolled into the river and lashed together with the glacier rope. Sticks and boughs were piled on the middle to make a dry platform for the three dunnage sacks. Lucius went to the bow, Stewart to the stern, while I took the middle, each armed with a pole to fend off from rocks. A strong push from all together sent the raft into the current and the river swept us homewards. In spite of knees and feet wet with ice-water where the waves ran high round rocky bends the motion was exhilarating and our spirits rose, for we were making good time. We grounded on sand-bars and pried ourselves off again, and were caught in an eddy and revolved there till hard poling got us once more into the current. We were in doubt which channel to take when the river forked, and speculated as to future rapids; and all the time we were hurrying down the valley past the splendid procession of mountains. The mountain with the cross, a landmark of our first camp after leaving the Sunwapta, was beside us, and we had reached the abomination of desolation

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where the great fire had run. It was time to land on the right shore of the river to make our way across the tangle of logs to the main camp.

The ten miles that took us four and a half hours of painful trudging on the way up were passed in two hours on the way down. There was a shrill noise, and on a high bench inland from the river we saw two dark figures sitting, Jimmy Jacob and Mark Two-young-men. We answered the Indians' shout and pushed for land, stranding, of course, on a bar well out in the river, waded ashore with our bundles, took off the ropes and let the logs drift where they would, and struck inland over the ashy ground.

Presently the Indians silently drew near and took the lead, following an old trail which they had picked up, and about half-past six we came out on the muskeg by the Sunwapta, where the roan and the grey were waiting for us. The Indians strapped our packs on one of them, and we walked on free from our burdens, with that curious forward-falling sensation of men suddenly relieved from a load.

Soon more ponies were caught and we mounted them bare-backed to ford the Sunwapta, and at seven o'clock we were in camp, where Laird met us joyfully. But there was one bit of bad luck awaiting us. Mickie, my brother's riding horse, perhaps the most valuable of our animals, had been someway tangled up by getting his drag-rope caught in a stump and was in a serious state when we began our tramp. Poor Mickie had breathed

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his last and been rolled into the river a day or two after we left.

However, nothing damped our spirits as we dined in the tent that evening with plenty of bannocks and beans and apple sauce. A keen appreciation of the advantages of civilisation came over us, and we were quite content with the world when we turned into our blankets without having to look up a tree that would shed rain for our night quarters.

During the ten days of our excursion we had carried packs for thirty-five or forty miles into unknown mountains, through woods and bogs and rocky slopes, picking our way without a trail, living in a little world of our own, at home in the evening wherever there was wood and water and a sheltering tree where three blanket bags could be spread close together.

Altogether we had travelled more than eighty miles and had climbed two mountains rising from four thousand to six thousand feet above the valley, and if we had not found Brown and Hooker we had found some other things almost as good. Fortress Lake we believed to be the finest in the mountains, and we could turn our back on the region with fair good-humour.

## CHAPTER XIX

### THE RETURN TO MORLEY

IT was now the end of August and autumn tints were beginning to show on the barer slopes, yellows and browns and the crimson patches of a low-lying plant whose leaves were as red as its berries. Mosquitoes and bulldogs had disappeared with the frosty nights, and so life had lost one heavy burden. We had more than two hundred miles of mountain trails to cover on our way home, not counting all the crooks and turns of an Indian pony trail at its worst. No time should be lost, for our bacon and sugar were nearly ended, though we still had plenty of flour and tea.

After a Sunday's rest we started homewards on August 29th, through showery and sometimes snowy weather, following Poboktan Creek and Pass, and then Brazeau Lake and River to our former camp in that valley. Here, instead of going north-east out of the mountains to the horrible trail in the foot-hills over which Mark had led us, we followed the route traversed by my brother and Jimmy in taking Pruyn to Morley.

First we went south, along a stream which we



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called Job's Creek, from the enterprising Stony Indian Job Beaver, who had worked out the trail, then climbed a steep slope to Job's Pass, rising above eight thousand feet, a thousand feet above timber-line. From this rough mountain saddle an equally steep descent leads down to an important stream flowing into Cataract River (Hahaseegeewapta), which we named Coral Creek, from the many fossil corals among its gravels. On our way the fine folded peak of Sentinel Mountain stood out impressively from the distant Kootenay plains, and we were glad to come down with our worn-out horses from the snowstorms and rocky slopes of Job's Pass and Coral Creek into the prairie grass along the Saskatchewan, where ponies could trot once more.

At the higher levels we had always reached camp soaked with cold rain or with snow from overhanging bushes, and at night Stewart built regular log houses for fires, and Jimmy piled up pitchy stumps into teepees of flame, so that we might dry our clothes before getting between the blankets. Going to bed, we pulled off our boots, but put on all the other clothing we possessed, for there was hard frost at night.

The warm and tempting Saskatchewan valley gave only a brief respite, however, and the delight of cantering over the plain, with the mild thunder of hoofs on the turf, which made the ponies—true prairie animals—happy again, lasted only one day.

We had descended four thousand feet in two days from Job's Pass; and now we had to climb

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three thousand feet out of the valley once more, up the rough and steep trail, following White Rabbit Creek to the Atikoseepie valley, where we halted over Sunday, partly to rest the horses and partly to get a supply of dried sheep-meat from Job Beaver. His two sons—Shamosin, whom we had met before, and his elder brother John—had turned up by the way, and told us of Beaver's success in hunting the sheep, so we sent Jimmy with them to get meat. Mark could not resist the temptation, and slipped off, too, without permission.

Sunday evening the four Indians came into camp with the dried meat rattling in a bag, and with a fine sheep's head which Laird bought as a trophy of the mountains. Getting it out to civilisation on horseback made no end of trouble.

Dried meat looks quite unattractive, but its leathery shreds when boiled into a stew would sustain life now that the bacon was gone. The Indians carried a pouch of it on their saddle, and nibbled a strip to pass the time on the trail.

Job's sons invited themselves to join our party on the way to Morley, and we had a good chance to make their acquaintance. Shamosin turns out to be really the Stony version of Samson, for, like all the other members of the tribe, he had been christened with a good Bible name, without any reference to his fitness for the part. The graceful, smiling boy, whom we all liked, showed no signs of becoming a Samson in stature. John, who was a slender, delicate-looking young man, with a face cynical enough for Mephistopheles, was

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dressed in grand finery, with plenty of rings and beads in his make-up, but none of us loved him.

On Monday morning we were on the trail again, over the pass into the Clearwater valley, the ponies dreadfully footsore. Tough little Chub—my saddle pony—would go any distance round to avoid a rock or strip of gravel, and he disliked soft places quite as much, so that for one or the other reason he was always sidling off the trail and grinding my knees against tree trunks.

Jimmy went ahead as usual, with John riding serenely beside or behind him on his black and white horse, while Samson had to drive their pack pony, a mare with a foal that was always getting into mischief. The two were most exasperating, but the boy rode smilingly after them into the worst thickets without a hard word or a look of annoyance.

Though John had made a hard bargain with us for dried meat, and had not shown himself helpful about camp, he seemed to expect us to feed him on the way to Morley out of our short supplies, including a large allowance of stew made from the very meat that we had bought. We got tired of it, and no rations were handed to him next morning as he stood by the fire with his sinister face, but afterwards Jimmy or Mark saw that he did not go hungry.

Without halting on the Clearwater, we crossed the next pass to the Mountain Park, on the Red Deer, where Mark went down to the river with a bit of meat and in a few minutes caught three trout, speckled, but with no red spots, the largest nearly two feet long. They were fried and

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served for dinner before we were in camp half an hour. Mark roasted the smallest for himself, and Jimmy was not satisfied with our cooking and afterwards boiled his share of the fish.

John and Samson lost their horses, and could not go on with us next morning as we went down the pretty Red Deer valley, out of the mountains and into the region of foot-hills and prairie. Ponies and riders were well satisfied to trot over the sod or along the brown, well-trodden trails through groves of spruce or poplar on the sunny plains, and after thirty-eight miles of travel our last camp was pitched at Greasy Creek, so called from the bushes of knotched-leaved birch which, for some mysterious reason, is named greasewood. It was our longest day's journey, and we camped quite in the open, so that we had to "snake in" some dead trees from a distance for our fire.

Then came the home stretch, on September 8th, when we passed the little Red Deer valley, part of my brother's ranch land, wound through meadows beside two boggy lakes, forded Ghost River, now very shallow, climbed the steep benches, and trotted over rolling hills toward Bow River.

Passing through Fletcher's ranch, sleek cows eyed us placidly, and men at work in the yellow oatfields stopped to look at us. This morning Jimmy had appeared once more in the long-tailed black coat, and Mark was resplendent in a newly pipeclayed hat, all his beads round his neck and on his long forelocks, and with a little sleigh-bell tinkling on his bridle. The white men had no



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finery to put on, and looked ragged and poverty-stricken as compared with the red men.

The last swell of hills was past, and as we trotted down into the grey-greens and tawny yellows of autumn in the final valley, where Bow River curves down from the mountains, a railway train rumbling up the pass on the other side of the valley completed our stock of new sensations. For more than two months we had seen, outside of our own party, only Job Beaver's two sons.

We had reached civilisation, the ponies were unpacked at the ranch, and all at once a strange feeling of homelessness came over me. No need to look round for saplings as tent poles, for the dingy old tent was not to be pitched again. All was over, and the party must scatter.

Next day we paid Jimmy and Mark at McDougall's store. McDougall had recently taken in most of the treaty money paid by the Government to the Indians of the Stony Reserve. These payments are always made in crisp new one-dollar bills, since the Indians do not understand the figures on bills of larger denominations, and very quickly these dollars lodge in the hands of the store-keepers. I had arranged with McDougall to supply enough of them for my purpose, and in the midst of an interested crowd the bills were counted out one by one into the waiting hand of Jimmy, the bystanders grunting when every tenth was paid down. Then came Mark's turn.

It was an exciting time. Never before had our two men stood so high in the esteem of the com-



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munity, for now they were men of means, worthy of admiration and respect. Jimmy, on the whole, deserved all the dollar bills he was paid, as well as the flour and unused tea which fell to his share ; but Mark was lazy and gluttonous, and really deserved very little.

Our expedition was over, and we had come home disappointed in our main object ; yet we did not part without some consolations. We had covered five hundred miles of unmapped mountain trails, had discovered and named rivers, lakes, and passes, and climbed a dozen virgin mountains. We had shifted materially the boundary between Alberta and British Columbia by proving that the Fortress Lake valley drained into the Columbia River. Hitherto the line had been drawn straight on the maps of the mountains, but henceforth it would bend eight miles to the east of its former position. In the Fortress Lake valley we had found a new pass between the prairies and the Columbia River, much lower than Athabasca Pass or Bow Pass, and somewhat lower than Howse Pass. It was rather surprising that this splendid lake and valley had remained hidden from all previous explorers.

Professor Stewart had mapped our route, checking the pedometer distances by observations for latitude, and I had kept a record of elevations as determined by aneroid and boiling-point thermometer.

Best of all, we had passed a glorious two months battling with Nature in one of her wilder moods.

## PART V

### *THE ROAD TO ATHABASCA PASS, 1893*

## CHAPTER XX

### THIRD EXPEDITION TO MOUNT BROWN

OUR third expedition toward Mount Brown included Professor L. B. Stewart, Mr. L. Q. Coleman, and myself, with Frank Sibbald, a young rancher, as packer and handy man for the party.

Jimmy Jacob and Mark Two-young-men the year before had been of little use except on their own familiar ground ; and by this time we knew almost as much of the route as they did, beside having Stewart's map to fall back on if we lost the way, so we took no guides. Sibbald was hardy and resourceful, as Western ranchers are apt to be, was thoroughly familiar with horses, and a fair camp cook, so that he served our purpose admirably, though he had seen little of the mountains, and did not profess to be a climber.

Living in Morley as a boy, he had learned the Cree and Stony languages from Indian playmates, so that he could talk to the Indians we met or travelled with and pick up useful information from them. Though we had the good luck to secure an

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efficient man like Sibbald, it was necessary for all to share in any kind of necessary work in packing, camping, and cooking, so as to waste no time on the journey.

A folding canvas boat was added to our outfit this year to avoid building a raft at the larger rivers ; and it proved to be very useful, but most inconvenient to pack on a pony, since it measured four and a half feet when done up in its canvas cover. It was always catching in trees or getting out of balance on the pack, and cost ponies and packers an immense amount of hard feeling and strenuous language, so that more than once we resolved to leave it behind, though we always relented. Nuisance though it was, we should probably never have reached our point in the summer of 1893 without the boat, since the winter before had been very snowy in the mountains, and the Saskatchewan and Athabasca were booming most of the summer.

With our smaller party of four, instead of seven, as last year, we took only eight ponies, including several of the old bunch of pack animals, that had wintered on my brother's range, and were in almost too good trim, being fat and wild from lack of work. They had entirely looked after themselves during the winter.

Our riding ponies were all different, however ; my brother's, which had lost its life beside the Sunwapta, was replaced by Belle, one of his own mares ; Stewart's had been sold, and as last year's mount had been named Brown, he christened the

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newly purchased horse Hooker ; and I exchanged hardy but short-legged Chub for a larger horse, named Andy.

As usual, the first attempt at packing resulted in a "circus," ugly old Pinto especially making trouble. It took two hours of hard riding to induce him to enter the corral, and then he bucked and tore the post he was tied to out of the ground when the saddle touched his back, but afterwards he was of lamblike meekness.

It was afternoon on July 8th before all was ready, and our little procession moved northwards through the valleys between the foot-hills, meeting the usual torments of ponies tangled in fallen timber or mired in muskegs. This part of the Stony trail, which had never been too good, was largely a quagmire, because of the wet season ; and the vast number of mosquitoes that assailed us may be laid to the same cause.

The rivalries of the ponies in the earlier part of the journey were of some practical importance, for until the vital questions of precedence are settled there can be no order in the procession. For days there were struggles for the lead—bitings, squealings, crowdings, and jostlings that the driver had to take some cognisance of to keep the train in motion, often urging his pony into the bush beside them so as to restore order. In one of these squabbles, Jones, an easy-going pack pony, was jostled off the narrow side-hill path and rolled over sideways, making a complete rotation, turning up on his feet at the bottom of the hill

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with pack all in order, and trotting on with no display of emotion.

The strongest pack pony always tries to keep in front of another animal, where the driver's whip cannot reach him. In that comfortable position he can stop long enough to browse on a willow-bush, or tear up a tall plant of vetch in purple blossom, and any punishment will descend on the flanks of his rear guard. Our lively sorrel pack pony always practised this exasperating strategy, until the driver lost his temper and plunged forward through the brushwood to give him some mighty blows ; but before the deserved punishment arrived Sorrel was trotting unconcernedly ahead as if he had never broken the law.

Although we had engaged no Indian guides we had Indian companions in the earlier part of our journey, since Chief Jonas and his family were going our way. They usually fell behind during the day, but always arrived in the evening, camping not far off, so that the chief, and sometimes his young man, might conveniently invite themselves to dinner with us.

The chief dressed his part only moderately well. His black felt hat, it is true, was bound with ermine and had a row of ostrich feathers running from front to rear, but the rest of his garments were in shabby white man's fashion, far less imposing than Jimmy's clerical coat of last year.

Although Jonas was not beautiful and was rather a nuisance at mealtimes, we encouraged his visits, since he knew many parts of the moun-



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tains very well. He talked guttural Stony to Frank while the bannocks were baking, and Frank responded in musical Cree and served as interpreter. Inquiring about passes toward the Sunwapta, Jonas promised to make me a map; so a pencil and a large piece of brown paper, just unwrapped from a ham, were furnished him and next day the map was ready, directions and distances vague, yet with valuable hints which we made use of later. He also gave us the Indian names for several rivers on Stewart's last year's map.

The young man who came with him was more picturesque than Jonas himself. He was hatless, but well thatched with long, coarse black hair in braids adorned with brass rings, wore an old white cotton jacket trimmed with red, a breech cloth, and the usual fringed leggings, ending with "flat shoes," a simple kind of moccasin made of moose-hide. When he squatted beside our fire, his leggings parted widely from the skirt of his short jacket, leaving a large area of uncovered brown thigh on which the mosquitoes pastured.

Jonas and his young man were constantly in evidence, riding ahead in state, while Madame Jonas with a baby in the blanket on her back, and a vigorous girl, clothed only in a pink calico gown, bestrode their riding ponies and hustled along the pack animals. The ponies were unpacked, the teepee was put up, and the camp arranged by the two women, with a little aid from some children whom I had no chance to look at or count.

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Another Indian family met us, coming from the north, and stopped not far off. There was but one man, squalidly dressed, but riding with a lordly air at the head of the band, followed by a disorderly troop of women, children, ponies, and dogs. This proportion of one man to several women, common among the Stonies, is said to come from the high mortality among hunters, who are the bread-winners. The party halted near us till supper, after which with barkings and neighings the band moved on without saying adieu.

Amid showers and rainbows we passed from the foot-hills into the lower end of the Red Deer valley, with its cliffs and snowless mountains on each side, and then, as in the former journey, crossed the pass into the Clearwater valley. We camped near the pass, which does not quite reach timber-line, and took the opportunity to climb a mountain and revive our impressions of the world above the plains and foot-hills.

From the red and white heathers, the forget-me-nots, and the monk's-hoods at our camp near tree-line we tramped over sedgy, flowery slopes with easy grades to the mountain-top, 8,500 feet above the sea, where saxifrages, campions like moss cushions with pink flowers pinned on, low-growing white and yellow dryas, and other composites made the turf, all squatting close to the ground in the most democratic way. To lift one's head above the rest meant buffeting the storms alone without support, and even the willows had trailing stems with yellow catkins as big as the whole

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tree, just as one sees them on Spitzbergen. Not far from the top a ptarmigan, still half-clothed with its winter white, stood glaringly conspicuous against a lichened rock, not aware apparently that it would be safer to wear summer styles or change its background.

From the top we looked over an abyss to the north-east, and beyond a lower range than our own saw the plains fading into the distance, while up the Clearwater there were little gems of lakes, and then the snowy central ranges of the Rockies. Later on we visited these lakes in their lovely setting of rocks and spruces, and found them to be the settling basins where glacial mud is deposited, so that the river flowing from the last deserves its name. How cool and clean and healthful everything was by contrast with the hot and dusty city we had left behind in the east!

The route north from the Clearwater had been appreciably lengthened since last summer by the fall of dead trees where fire had run. On an Indian trail trees are seldom chopped. Instead, the man who rides ahead pulls his horse into the bushes when he comes to a newly fallen trunk and goes round the end of it; the others follow automatically and the trail has been lengthened by one or two hundred feet. If kindly decay did not finally open up again the earlier pathway, one could imagine the trail through the woods at last reaching infinity, growing more and more meandering, like a river in its flood plain.

On our way down the White Rabbit Valley

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toward the Saskatchewan Chief Jonas left us, and we sent word by him to Jimmy Jacob, who was camped not far off, to follow us down and pilot us across the ford; but he was afraid of the big river in its high-water stage, so we went down stream to a point where it flowed in a single channel and prepared to ferry over. We chose a spot for the ferry where an eddy on our side gave an easy beginning for the voyage, and a strip of beach down stream on the other gave a good landing for the ponies, when their turn came to cross.

While we were fussing with the unfamiliar framework of the boat so as to get the canvas properly stretched a dog barked, and, following up the sound, we saw a camp in the woods, and not far off a man at work with a whipsaw.

He turned out to be McGavan, a prospector, who had left civilisation a month before, and, finding the river unfordable, was patiently sawing wood to build a boat when we arrived. He was only too glad to cross in our craft, which by this time lay complete on the shore, a frail enough looking punt, 12 feet long and 5 feet wide, to cross the brown river, 150 yards wide, which surged past just beyond the eddy. I did not like the looks of it, but Stewart, our most experienced oarsman, got in with a load of flour and saddles and pulled away manfully. The boat was swept far down stream, but landed safely, was unloaded and towed well above our camp, and came back light, swirling into the eddy at its lowest point.

It was now late in the afternoon and we worked



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hard with the little boat, which made several trips before the camp equipment was over. Then came the turn of the horses, which were driven down to the shore and with shouts and more substantial persuasion were sent out into the swift current. Yells and stones kept them from turning back, and soon they were all puffing and snorting toward the opposite bank, the best swimmers landing easily on the beach we had selected, others drifting a quarter of a mile down before managing to get on shore. They got so scattered in the woods that Sibbald could not hobble them for the night.

It was after dark before the tent was up, and midnight before we got to bed ; but we were all happy that things had gone so well on the first launching of the boat. So far as we could learn afterwards, McGavan and our party were the only ones to cross the Saskatchewan that summer.

Next morning all the horses were gone except old Pinto, the only one caught and hobbled, and Sibbald and McGavan had a long search for them, while the rest of us ferried what was left of our stuff when darkness came on the night before.

McGavan proved decidedly a character, who travelled alone with his little black dog and three cayuses, one of them decorated with a cow-bell for ease of finding them in the morning. From his mode of life in summer one might imagine such a lonely prospector to be a morose recluse shunning mankind ; but that would be a complete misconception, as we soon found out. He was the steadiest talker I ever met, and made full



## Third Expedition to Mount Brown

amends for his month without human society by deluging us with all sorts of inquiries about other people and of information about himself.

As soon as he learned that I was a geologist and not interested in gold-mining, he explained to me that he was going to make his fortune this summer. He had done some placer-mining in the Edmonton region, 250 miles down the Saskatchewan, where fine flour gold may be got from the sand bars laid bare after the spring floods, and had made up his mind, very naturally, that this gold came from the headwaters of the Saskatchewan in the Rocky Mountains. Setting out to find its sources, he began at the south, and had carefully prospected with shovel, pick, and pan every creek flowing from the mountains into the Saskatchewan, but had found no gold. This summer he was going to work on the last two tributaries, those farthest north, and was sure of striking the gold and "making his pile" at last.

Imagine this hearty fellow, fond of society, yet slipping off alone with his ponies and his dog, afraid to share his secret with other miners lest they might get the advantage of him, travelling for months through the roughest of mountain valleys and pitching his teepee beside the wildest creeks, scraping the gravel to bed-rock and panning day after day, but with never a colour to rejoice his eye when the pan was worked down to the last remnant of black sand. He professed, however, to be quite sure of gold in his last two creeks. He would prospect them carefully and take his time staking claims so as to get the best.

## The Canadian Rockies

I had never found gold in any part of the Rocky Mountains, and tried to moderate his hopes by telling him of Mr. Tyrrell's theory accounting for the gold of the Saskatchewan so far out on the plains. The Rockies are young mountains, dating only from the beginning of the Tertiary, and before they existed rivers flowed eastward from the Selkirk and Gold Ranges, which are far older. The whole belt of mountains south-west of the Rockies is gold-bearing, and much of the gold was transported out over the plains before the folds and faults which raised the Rocky Mountains had begun. The gold had travelled so far that all the nuggets were worn down into fine dust and deposited with the sedimentary rocks of the plains, from which year by year the Saskatchewan concentrates a few thousand dollars' worth in its bars.

McGavan was not convinced and left us where we turned off from the Saskatchewan, turning up stream to the two remaining creeks.

On our way home two months later we found old camp fires where a teepee had been put up with four poles, the smallest possible number. A bed of spruce-boughs just large enough for one man lay under the tripod, and here and there a heart-shaped piece of tin showed where a plug of chewing tobacco had been opened out. When we went to stake out one or two ponies in a good bit of meadow near camp we found three tethering stakes. McGavan had not discovered gold in the last two creeks flowing into the Saskatchewan, and had left the mountains before us.

## CHAPTER XXI

### A NEW PASS TO THE ATHABASCA

WE took a new and shorter way to Brazeau River, going up the Saskatchewan instead of down, as Mark Two-young-men had led us last year, first through the groves and meadows of the Kootenay plains and then up the valley of the Hahaseegeewapta, or Cataract River (literally Bad Rapid River). To reach this valley we had to scramble down into the Coral Creek canyon, ford the rapid stream, and climb the opposite wall, coming out well above the river in a wide U-shaped valley, with Sentinel Mountain behind us.

The Cataract valley received its smooth and rounded shape from the scour of a great glacier in the Ice Age; but two or three thousand feet above the river the polished surfaces are lost and the imposing walls of cathedral-shaped mountains rise to snowy summits. From a striking one which can be seen up the valley from the Kootenay plains, and which we named Minster Mountain, avalanches thundered down as we passed.

The beauty of Cataract valley was marred, as are so many parts of the Rocky Mountains, by

## The Canadian Rockies

a fire that had swept through it a few years before, and we travelled all day through burnt woods, where most of the trees were still standing, either covered with blackened bark or yellow-white, like tusks of ivory, where the singed bark had peeled off. The wood had dried out and cracked, and a rousing wind played strange music upon them, hisses and sighs and groans and whistlings, so that the valley was most dolefully bewitched.

Not far from its head Cataract River forks, one branch coming from a splendid valley to the south, where it begins in an exquisite lake about a mile long and broad, fed by an enormous spring forty feet wide. Pinto Lake, as we named it, is 5,850 feet above the sea, and on three sides of it mountain walls rise to seven or eight thousand feet, making a wonderful amphitheatre. We spent half of a showery Sunday visiting it and climbing up the easiest part of the wall, where a poorly-marked trail leads southward up to a tableland 1,500 feet above it, and then descends as steeply to the Saskatchewan. The mountains on either side of the lake rise to ten or eleven thousand feet, and if it were not so far from a railway this romantic pool among the woods and hills should be as attractive to mountain-lovers as Lake Louise. So far it has been visited by very few white men, though Indians come to fish in its crystalline waters.

The following day's journey took us over the divide at 7,550 feet. Near its summit Cataract Pass, as we may call it, is swept by snowslides which have mowed down the timber, making an

## A New Pass to the Athabasca

almost impassable tangle for ponies to cross ; and at the highest point the snow was so deep on July 24th that we made a wide detour up the mountain to get our horses past it. Fine peaks of dark red quartzite rise on each side, with glaciers about their shoulders, one reaching the level of the pass and feeding an indigo-coloured pond amid the snows of the summit.

A sharp descent on the other side brought us to the headwaters of the Brazeau, where we had done some exploring the year before ; and we camped at about 6,000 feet in weather so cool that we had to break thick ice on the water-pail when the fire was lit for breakfast next morning and the kettle put on for tea.

Instead of the roundabout trail by Brazeau Lake and Poboktan Creek which we had discovered the previous year we intended to cross to the Sun-wapta by a pass marked on Chief Jonas's brown-paper map, and before breaking camp we set out to look for it.

A steep, snowy ridge, rising to nine thousand feet, gave wide views up and down the valley, but settled nothing as to the pass. On the way down a mother ptarmigan played the usual comedy to protect her chicks, sprawling and fluttering on the snow a yard or two from us while they scattered in all directions. When the danger was past the little hen gave the proper cluck and was off with her brood.

To solve the problem of the pass we climbed a higher mountain next day, a tilted block like



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all the peaks along the Brazeau, but so steeply tilted and with so rugged a surface of limestone that it was no "sidewalk" to ascend. From the top we had one of the finest panoramas in the Rockies, for the Columbia icefield with its surrounding peaks and glaciers was only ten or fifteen miles to the south-west, and the snow dome we had seen on a former climb showed mysteriously under brooding clouds. We could look down the whole length of the Brazeau valley and see the high, glacier-covered mountain north of Brazeau Lake, and we could look over into the head of the Sunwapta valley toward the north-west. From this high point we could see a valley crossing from near our camp toward a creek flowing into the Sunwapta, evidently the pass Jonas intended we should take, so that our plans were settled. There was a bitterly cold wind sweeping the top of the mountain, and we lost no time in beginning the descent on a slope of fine scree that slid with us. In twelve minutes we reached its end, 1,700 feet below the top, and in an hour we were 3,200 feet down, among the last trees, where our ponies had been tied. The ascent had taken about four hours.

During the night heavy rain pattered on the tent, and in the morning everything above timber-line was white with fresh snow, a misfortune for us with a high pass to be crossed.

Soon after starting we found a well-beaten and blazed trail, the one Jonas had told us of, winding up a very steep slope for horses to the mouth of

## A New Pass to the Athabasca

a hanging valley far above the Brazeau, and for the greater part above the trees.

We left the flowery slopes of forget-me-nots and gentians where the snow had melted, and rose upon barren fields of small stones and patches of turf clammy with softening masses of snow at about 7,700 feet. The trail ceased, as usual on passes, and for seven or eight miles we plodded through slush and mire, until the valley dipped down to timber-line on the other side, where we were glad to camp beside a small creek, among the highest trees. We named the pass and creek for Chief Jonas. The pasture was poor and the short, stumpy spruces made very clumsy tent-poles, but horses and men were glad to halt at the first point possible.

An incautious porcupine, knocked on the head to keep him from doing mischief to our stock of saddles, was put in the pot for supper, and proved so old and tough that he lasted for breakfast also.

Then came a terrible bit of travel down Jonas Creek to the Sunwapta, when we alternately splashed through muskegs with sharp stones beneath the moss, and climbed up steep, rocky banks to escape them. At one such assault Roan, who carried the boat and other unwieldy things, actually tumbled over backwards and had to be unpacked to get up to the top. Things grew even worse lower down the valley, for there the woods were burnt and the fire had consumed the moss, leaving sharp rocks and fallen logs instead of a trail.

Nothing more depressing can be imagined than these burnt forests, with rags of black bark peeling

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from ghastly bare trunks under a showery sky, and the slippery rocks beneath added to the misery for the ponies, so that every one was relieved when we came out of the rocky gorge into the gentler slopes of the Sunwapta valley. Jonas described the pass as a good one, but that must have been before the fire had ruined it.

We found ourselves five or six miles above last year's camp at the mouth of Poboktan Creek, but the wide valley looked friendly and familiar, putting us once more in good spirits, while the horses fell ravenously upon the fresh grass after half starving the night before at timber-line.

Toward the close of such a day everything seems to go wrong. The animals are tired and galled and desperately hungry after six hours under their loads, stumbling over rocks, plunging through muskegs, and leaping over logs, and the hungry driver, black from the burnt timber he has fought with, is sure to be in a bad temper. His lunch of a dry quarter of bannock was eaten hours ago, and he must get into camp before rest or food is possible.

To have a pack go wrong at the last stage of such a day, scattering hams and tin plates and forks and spoons over half a mile of bad trail, is simply heart-breaking; and this actually happened to us just as we entered the main valley. Wearily we gathered things up, and once more put the pack on the restless, sore-backed animal. Meantime, of course, the other ponies were snatching for tufts of grass and getting into mischief among the fallen logs.

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At last the packs and saddles were on the ground beside the river and the sweaty beasts had taken a long drink and were filling themselves on good pasture, while we hurried up a fire to fry bacon and make tea. Our camp was excellent except for the burnt timber, but no washing seemed to take off all of the black we had accumulated on the way down. The once white pack covers were now smudged into various tones of grey and black, and our clothes were smeared so that to touch them was to smear one's hands afresh.

To give the ponies a holiday, we spent the next day in exploring the Sunwapta valley, and climbed a peak ten thousand feet high just to the east of its head waters. In this part the river is almost entirely glacier-fed, and every sunny afternoon sends down a flood of muddy water spreading over the flats, while at night the water sinks and grows clearer. The mud flats had hardened in the sun between showers, and made good travelling after the exasperating trails of the last few days.

Our climb of 4,700 feet above the valley, over lower tree-clad slopes followed by rough limestones toward the top, was made in four hours, and proved hard but not dangerous. The view of the valley from above was marvellous; for miles above and below a wonderful network of river channels cut the grey mudflats like a skein of green silk flung ravelled on the floor. At the head of the valley we saw the same splendid snowfields and peaks and walls of cliff as from the last mountain, but at a different angle.



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As the valley is 5,300 feet above the sea, and the mountains rise to twelve thousand feet, the effect of height is more striking than from the Brazeau.

The next day was Sunday, clear and hot, filling the river and bringing out the bulldog flies in myriads to torment the horses, so we built them a juicy smudge thick with the rank fumes of green moss ; but they came to our fire, perhaps with some idea that we could protect them from their enemies, and we had to barricade our own quarters with lash ropes tied to the trees.

Lucius's three-year-old pet mare, Belle, amused and annoyed us. She had absolutely no fear of man, came right up to the tent and lounged over our fire, rubbing her head against us to wipe off flies, and behaving as if the camp generally were intended for her convenience. She was greatly in the way at bannock-baking times and was alert to pick up stray pieces of bread, such as a man's lunch laid on a log before being put in the pocket. Anything in the way of punishment short of an actual beating she took most good-naturedly and never allowed it to interfere with her friendly attitude toward the family.

We started down the Sunwapta valley, expecting in an hour or two to be at the old camp-ground where Laird had waited for us on our foot trip to Fortress Lake, but soon halted before a wilderness of rugged quartzite blocks, often ten feet through, that no pony could cross. A huge white scar on the mountain beyond showed where a cubic mile of rock had broken from its top and swept across



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the valley, partly damming the river. It cost us half the morning to pick a way round the land-slip, and then we were confronted with the fallen timber which had stopped us the year before.

The three axes were got out and we took turns at chopping a way through the miles of windfalls, sometimes following an old trail, but oftener losing it. The work was disgustingly slow, and once we forded, in despair of making our way on the east side, but a few miles down forded back again. Our rate of travel dropped to five or six miles a day instead of the usual fifteen or twenty.

At length we reached the junction of the Sunwapta and the Athabasca, where the combined flow was too deep for fording, and looking up the main valley and that of Chaba River, we could see the mountain of the Cross and beautiful Mount Quincy in the distance. Our camp near the junction was beside the waterfall in a canyon, which we had found the year before, and the mellow roar came soothingly to us in our blankets after a hard day with the axes.

As the valley broadened, a bit of good trail cheered us and the axes had a rest. Pushing noisily along, a black bear took fright at our party and galloped away, never stopping till he had swum the river, and Stewart, who followed him, was quite left behind in the race. A grizzly or a cinnamon bear would have moved away, too, from such a startling caravan, but deliberately and with some dignity, so that Stewart might have got a shot at him. Judging from our own experiences in the

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mountains, the only really dangerous animals are the black fly, the mosquito, and the "bulldog."

Where the trees had fallen after a first burning, and had then been burnt a second time, the flats and hillsides were covered with fireweed in bloom, a splendid purplish red mantle to cover blackness and ashes, and the distant slopes looked like Scotch heather, but of a richer and purer colour.

Soon, however, the trail turned down to boggy ground along the river, where the horses dreaded being mired and would even jump into the water to avoid a mudhole where another animal was struggling. One pack pony forded to an island, and when chased off rushed into deep water where he had to swim, to the detriment of his load of groceries.

Then came a growth of young pitch pines just swept by the fire, all their slender branches cramped and twisted and stiffened by the heat, making black hooks and claws to snatch and tear everything that passed. Fires were still burning toward the north-west, giving a blood-red sun and strange evening colours to be reflected in the river; and we wondered how they had started in this uninhabited region, not knowing at the time that there was a halfbreed settlement not many miles down the valley.

We were nearing the latitude where the Whirlpool should join the Athabasca from the opposite side, and Stewart took the sun with his sextant every day. At one noon-halt for the purpose we were close beside a second canyon into which the

## A New Pass to the Athabasca

river plunged, sending up spray from the depths to make a perpetual rainbow.

In a cavern under the cliffs logs of wood could be seen revolving in an eddy, and near the roof of the cavern swallows had built their nests and kept flying in and out. Below the falls the cleft is at one place so narrow that some one had flung over six small spruces as a bridge, but one would need a steady head to cross it.

While Stewart was arranging his artificial horizon the rest of us sat on a projecting rock trembling with the concussion of the fall and delightfully cool with the breath of the chaldron beneath, and for a while forgot all about slimy muskegs and the tormenting black flies among shadeless black trees.

There were two more days of misery in the burnt woods before reaching what we took to be Whirlpool River. On one of them Frank and Stewart went ahead to cut trail through a dense second growth of pine with bigger fallen trunks piled up among them, while my brother and I came on with the nine ponies. All at once the trail stopped at a precipice above a torrent flowing through a ravine. The trail-cutters had picked another way across, and it was our duty to turn the ponies right-about-face among the tangled saplings and fallen logs, take them back a hundred yards, and start them in the new direction.

No one who has not travelled on mountain trails can imagine the shouting, coaxing, whipping, and leading needed to get those animals in motion on the new course. They were as exasperated and

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obstinate as we were, and it was nearly half an hour before, hot and angry, we reached the torrent at an easier point and forded over the round stones of its bed with the foamy water splashing against the horses' flanks on the up-stream side.

Our axes were getting very dull from striking stones in slashing out the trail, and no work with the file and whetstone would give them a serviceable edge, so that the constant chopping grew very hard, though we took turns in the attack. On August 6th things reached a climax, and we were almost in despair. Starting at three that afternoon, after a halt for lunch in a tangle with no grass for the horses, we toiled forward through burnt woods, where the beasts were constantly going aside to snatch some tuft of grass and had to be hunted back, crashing through the branches and tearing down dead trees on the way. It was nine o'clock when we came out of the woods into open ground with a little pasture, and before we could get the tent pitched in the dusk a thunderstorm was upon us. Our only water supply was a little rill, that had to be dipped up cup by cup to fill the pails.

When a candle was lit in the tent at ten o'clock the scene was curious, for we were all black as mulattoes from the wet burnt branches and bark of trees we had encountered. In six hours of heavy work we had come only three miles on our way. After we had gone to bed we heard Belle come up to the tent and drink the water in our pail left just outside the door to save time in getting breakfast.

In the morning the horses were right around us,



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afraid to go farther into the fallen timber, but fortunately there was plenty for them to eat.

Days like this made one wish he had never come out in search of high mountains, but after this things improved and we could sometimes trot over bits of prairie covered with long grass or through groves of unburnt timber.

The valley had gradually widened and the nearer mountains were lower and without snow, though some fine distant peaks could still be seen to the south, and at one camp we heard the curious yelping laugh of a pack of coyotes, at which Frank Sibbald, a true plainsman, was overjoyed. "It's a decent country where there are coyotes," was his comment.

The trail became well beaten and well blazed, and we wondered by whom the work had been done; for even if the early railway exploring parties had come this way, the trail would have grown up again long before this.

The river was now as wide as the Saskatchewan on Kootenay Plains, and big Douglas fir-trees began to show themselves, evidence of a wide-open door to British Columbia. After a week of burnt timber it was an immense comfort to camp on green grass among willow-bushes beside the river, and we felt ourselves Christians again, full of good feeling and charity even for pack ponies.

We had reached the proper latitude, and began to wonder whether we had missed Whirlpool River, when a wide valley opened on the other side of the Athabasca as if in answer to our question.



## CHAPTER XXII

### THE MIETTE VALLEY

THE boat was put together and we crossed to have a look at things, finding a river about seventy-five feet wide, with deep blue-green water, and not at all suggestive of whirlpools in its gentle flow; but perhaps it was more headlong farther up the valley. There was a good trail in that direction, and we were deeply interested to find fresh tracks of horses much larger than our ponies, and also fresh camping-grounds. Some one had passed that way only a short time before—white men or Indians? We were far beyond the hunting-grounds of the mountain Stonies.

At the time we had no solution for the problem, which greatly puzzled us; but thirteen years later we found that a prospector and explorer named Swift had been in the region then, and had been equally puzzled by our tracks, which he had found on some of the trails.

From the direction of the valley we began to suspect that the river might be the Miette, and not the Whirlpool; and as Henry House was placed on the map not far from the mouth of the

## The Miette Valley

Miette, Stewart and Frank rode some miles down the valley in search of the "house," but they found none, which reassured us. Years afterwards we learned that the log houses of the post had been burned, leaving only some ruined chimneys, which were overlooked. Frank reported that the bare, grassy benches and hills over which they cantered must be good ranch land, and they heard a mysterious cow-bell in the distance down the valley, but saw nothing; doubtless the bell was on the neck of one of Swift's horses. As the map showed a *prairie des vaches* a little way down-stream, the cow-bell was very suggestive to imaginations roused by the uncertainty. Were we in the right valley or the wrong one? Were there neighbours not far off who could tell us all about it?

We decided to go far enough up the valley to settle matters, so our outfit was ferried over, while the horses swam, and we followed the well-beaten trail, out of which some one with a keen axe had cut logs two or three feet through. Climbing over bare rock ridges, or travelling through thickets of alder and willow along the water, the path led up the river for ten miles, and then was lost in a grove of spruce, with no hint of open ground beyond. It was time to camp, and we unsaddled the ponies, which fed voraciously on the rank equisetums along the shore and among the trees, apparently liking this coarse fare better than grass.

We were not the first to camp here, for broad blazes on the trees had been decorated with charcoal figures of men and animals, one sketch

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showing a man and a boy hunting with guns, while two dogs followed. The work must have been done by Indians.

We set out for the nearest mountain, but never reached it, because of fearful windfalls. However, we could see far enough to settle that the valley ran west instead of south, so that the river must be the Miette, and the trail must lead to the Yellowhead Pass. It was clear that in some way we had missed the Whirlpool.

Next morning we urged our ponies eastward, and our thoughts of the quiet, blue-green Miette, lurking in the forest shadows, were by no means loving, for we had wasted three days' hard work over the wrong valley.

Once more the ponies swam the Athabasca, and we travelled back along its eastern shore, camping about eight miles up, from which point we walked on along the bank, keeping a sharp lookout for the Whirlpool River. Before long Stewart noticed that the water on the other side was greener than on ours, and, reaching a bend in the Athabasca, we saw the real Whirlpool, with its narrow valley reaching far to the south into the mountains.

In our hurry to cut a way through the timber and hustle up the unwilling ponies, we had passed the mouth of the river, coming in on the opposite shore of the Athabasca without noticing it, and had paid the penalty with fifty miles of travel and four days' loss of time.

Presently we found blazes leading to a ford, and hoped that the late season and the cloudy

## The Miette Valley

weather had lowered the river so that we should not need the boat ; but next morning the horse that tried it had to swim, and we ferried across the Athabasca for the third time. We were in better spirits, however, now that we felt sure of being on the right track ; and we all recalled, when it was too late, that the Miette was too small, that the mountains along its valley were too insignificant, and that its water was too clear to have come from glaciers.

## CHAPTER XXIII

### WHIRLPOOL RIVER

THE real Whirlpool River fulfilled all our expectations. It was rapid, as one would expect of a river tumbling two thousand feet in thirty miles; it was turbid with glacial mud, and it came from between lofty mountains.

It was my turn to lead the procession as we turned towards the Whirlpool valley; and in spite of clouds of those little winged tigers, the black flies, at first I enjoyed picking a way up this famous pass, once a thoroughfare—as mountain passes go—with thousands of dollars' worth of rare furs travelling eastwards. It was seven or eight miles before we reached the entrance to the actual valley, and we camped at its mouth.

Crossing the Whirlpool next morning, we were surprised to find the old fur traders' trail so well cut out and with such frequent blazes. It had, no doubt, been freshened up by the early C. P. R. survey parties, though Indians must have used it later. Then came the usual alternations of green timber, with soft, mossy pathways, in a green twilight; of burnt timber, with a confusion of



## Whirlpool River

fallen logs, through which one must twist and turn to avoid too much chopping; of muskeg and shallow, muddy lakes, which one must skirt cautiously lest some animal get mired.

Before the second camp on the Whirlpool a serious accident happened to me in the woods. A splintered sapling, long and sharp, drove through the broad, wooden stirrup beside my left foot and pierced my horse's side, the farther end of the stick catching against trees and pushing the point deeper into his flank. Andy was frantic and out of control, and dashed among the trees; then the axe which I carried in my hand to clear the trail jabbed his neck, and in a moment I was smashed against a tree and flung from the saddle. I was stunned for a minute, but managed to climb on my horse again after he had been caught and quieted and rode on to camp. Though I was badly bruised no bones were broken, and I hoped in a day or two to be ready for climbing when we reached Mount Brown.

After a bad night my left knee proved to have been so seriously wrenched that I could only get round with the help of two sticks; and it was clear that climbing was out of the question during this season—a bitter disappointment, with Mount Brown almost in sight. I rode Andy through thick and thin for the rest of the trip with only my right foot in the stirrup, and it was years before I could trust myself in the mountains again.

This was a bad handicap for the party, since the other three had all the work to do; and, to

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relieve them, the dish-washing fell to my lot, a task I always hated.

It is a curious sensation for an active, self-sufficient man suddenly to find himself a cripple, to be cared for by others.

We advanced steadily along the old trail, with its rotten log bridges over creeks and muskegs; sometimes the boiling river, with the eddies and whirlpools that its name suggested, had carved away the bank, trail and all. A fine snowy peak ahead must surely be Mount Brown; and the other three worked like heroes to quicken our speed, while I spent the time pulling Andy to the right of the trail so that my swollen knee should not be bruised against tree trunks.

The trail was lost for some time, and the others scattered to look for it, while I waited by the river among the slender pines and spruces. They were long away, and the river voices and the voices of wind in the trees made a doleful music, so that sometimes I thought there was a shout from Stewart or Lucius that the trail had been found, but it was only a louder surge of the rapid.

The whirlpool was here spread out over a wide flat, after the manner of glacial rivers; and, as often happens under these circumstances, there was no defined trail, since the river channels were constantly shifting with the flooding due to hot sunshine. We had to pick the best way we could, fording branch after branch, and keeping along the openest gravel flats.

Our camp was not far from a glacier coming

## Whirlpool River

down to the valley, comparable in size to the Rhone Glacier in Switzerland, and furnishing probably half the water of the river, which henceforth was only a moderate creek, easily forded. We were near the headwaters, and therefore near our goal, but camped on the flats, where there was pasture, since up the valley only woods could be seen.

On August 19th, five days after leaving the Athabasca, we set out, expecting to find camp in the evening at the foot of Mount Brown. The horses had stuffed themselves, as Indian ponies do when the grass is good, and hated to be saddled; and as I crouched under a tree old Black, who had just been cinched up, was whimpering like a puppy left out of doors on a cold night. Presently all were saddled and packed, and I climbed on my own horse ready for the start, keen to see the giants Brown and Hooker, which should loom up just round the bend of the valley ahead.

The timber presently became more open, for we were above five thousand feet; and our horses' feet sank noiselessly in the moss, only here and there clattering over a small, open, gravel flat. There were flowers of autumn in the open places—red and yellow paint-brushes and lilac-coloured asters; and at first all was moist and cool and pleasant; then the sun grew hot toward midday, the river turned to a muddy, foaming torrent, and the bulldogs and buffalo flies drove the horses frantic.

At noon there was a good feed for the animals, for the sward was kept green by innumerable small

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rills of cool water ; but they preferred to line up in the drifting smoke of the smudge built for their benefit, since sand-flies and black flies had now joined forces with the other tormentors.

Less than an hour's journey after lunch brought us to a pond sending a little stream down the valley, and we had reached the headwaters of the Whirlpool. From the other end of the pond a rill flowed southwards, doubtless to the Columbia ; and we halted on the green shore of the Committee's Punch Bowl, which sends its waters to two oceans nearly two thousand miles apart. Some of the maps make the Punch Bowl a lake ten miles long, but here in real life it was only a small pool less than two hundred yards long. There could be no doubt that it was the Punch Bowl, for beyond it the water flowed in the opposite direction. We were on the Great Divide, the ridge pole of North America, but we felt no enthusiasm. Instead, we felt disillusioned.

If this was the Punch Bowl, where were the giant mountains Brown and Hooker?

We looked in vain for magnificent summits rising ten thousand feet above the pass, one on each side. Instead, we saw commonplace mountains with nothing distinguished in their appearance, undoubtedly lower than half a dozen peaks we had climbed as incidents along the way for the fun of the thing, or as lookout points from which to choose our route. It was clear that our glacier rope and ice equipment would not be needed.

We got the saddles off the ponies and pitched







OUR CAMP. LOOKING TOWARDS MOUNT BROWN.



THE COMMITTEE'S PUNCH BOWL.

To face p. 203.

## Whirlpool River

the tent beside the Punch Bowl silently. We had reached our point after six weeks of toil and anxiety, after three summers of effort, and we did not even raise a cheer. Mount Brown and Mount Hooker were frauds, and we were disgusted at having been humbugged by them. Personally, I found some solace for the disappointment, as I hobbled round camp, in the thought that if I could do no climbing it did not really matter much, for there was no glory to be got in climbing Mount Brown.

We had expected to row our canvas boat round the lake on the summit, an occupation that would have suited me, since it did not demand legs ; but the Punch Bowl was too small a pool to make it worth while, and the boat remained in its pack cover of green canvas.

## CHAPTER XXIV

### ON THE ROOF OF CANADA

WE stayed five days in our camp by the Punch Bowl. While Stewart and my brother explored the surroundings, Frank kept an eye on the ponies, and I loafed about the camp and fought the pestilent flies that made life a burden. Our valley was luxuriantly green, having a short turf of sedge with black tufts of bloom, beloved of the horses, with small groves of stubby white spruce, equally green but of a darker tone. The fragrant spruce-boughs made our bed, and a few dead trunks gave fire-wood that burnt well but sent off many sparks which perforated clothes and blankets with little brown holes. We had a large population of whistlers (marmots) for neighbours, mostly invisible unless one remained perfectly still for a while. They were very sociable among themselves, and their loud whistles were constantly sounding from among the rocks where they had their dwellings, and they had also a softer note, almost bird-like, for private use in the family.

When Frank chopped a dead tree and it fell with a crash, there was a horrified chorus of whistles

## On the Roof of Canada

from all sides to express their feelings at so shocking an event.

Two of our neighbours fell to Stewart's rifle and were put in the pot—fat, pursy fellows almost as big as a badger, clothed in a nice grey pelt ; but they tasted much like porcupine, and were not greatly admired at dinner.

We had another visitor in the pass one day when Stewart and my brother were off climbing. A full-grown cinnamon bear came sauntering along the trail toward our tent, evidently quite at home, but less than fifty yards away he crossed a point where Frank had dragged in some firewood, and caught the scent of man. He lifted his head and looked at us, while the long hair on his shoulders rose like bristles, then quietly turned aside, and we saw his grey-brown body moving off among the trees.

Frank had the rifle in his hand at the tent door and was trembling with eagerness to fire at our visitor ; but it was not a repeater, and I was only too well aware that I could not climb a tree with my disabled leg, so his wish was vetoed. However, Frank was not satisfied, and, taking the rifle, went out to catch Possum, his riding horse, to follow up the bear and get a shot at him : like a true cowboy, he felt safe and sure only on horse-back. No shot echoed up and down the valley, for, as Frank told me half shamefacedly afterwards, he could not get Possum within half a mile of the bear. The mere smell of his tracks made him snuff and snort with every sign of fright.

## The Canadian Rockies

I did not see exactly why we should be so impolite as to shoot at our quiet and courteous neighbour, and very much doubted if a single bullet would disable him.

Thunder-storms were frequent and magnificent during our stay, the black clouds roofing us in and hiding the sunlit snowfields beyond, turning everything around to chill green and grey, with a livid whiteness on the snow across the Bowl. The thunder was repeated as a lengthened growl from the mountains and down the valleys, and the scene was very dreary and sombre when rain fell on the pass, while the grey water of the Punch Bowl suggested nothing convivial. Who were the Committee, and why did they need so large a Punch Bowl on this desolate mountain pass? Even Highland Scotch fur traders could hardly have done much carousing on Athabasca Pass.

On the second day I had the valley all to myself when the others set off to climb Mount Brown. It was a fine day, which brought out the bulldogs, and as a consequence sent the ponies into camp in search of smoke, so that there was plenty of society. The climbers returned in the afternoon, reporting an easy ascent over good slopes, including a mile of snowfield, but ending near the top with stiffer work, needing both hands and feet, while the very top was capped with a heavy snow cornice which they did not think it wise to attempt. They estimated the thickness of snow on top at not more than 100 feet, and if our aneroid and boiling-point determinations of the height of the



## On the Roof of Canada

pass are correct—5,710 feet—Mount Brown is 9,050 feet high. If Moberly's determination of 6,025 feet is more exact, Mount Brown reached 9,365 feet. It has a glacier on one flank, but is by no means a striking peak. That the right mountain was climbed is certain, since there is no other even as high within ten miles on the north-west side of the pass.

The question of Mount Hooker is less certain. A ridge-like mountain climbed by Stewart and Lucius rises to 8,600 feet south-east of the pass at the point where Hooker is indicated on Palliser's map; but a much higher, finer peak rises a few miles east of the Punch Bowl, with fields of snow and a large glacier, and was estimated at about eleven thousand feet.

A third day was put on an excursion across the Mount Hooker ridge into the next valley in search of a route to Fortress Lake, and the two climbers had a very rough scramble over the ridge and down a tributary of Wood River to the main stream at 3,500 feet, which proved to be a violent, turbid river two thirds as large as the Athabasca. In its valley there was a dense forest of heavy timber, including cedars three feet thick and an undergrowth of almost impenetrable box alder and devil's club. They were too low down to get a glimpse into the Fortress Lake Valley and returned after dark, quite used up.

Though Fortress Lake was only ten miles away, there was evidently no way across to it without an immense amount of chopping, which no one was anxious for with our dull axes.

## The Canadian Rockies

There was no object in waiting longer on Athabasca Pass, and on August 24th we turned our steps down Whirlpool River on the way home, quite unelated, though we had been completely successful on our third attempt to reach Mounts Brown and Hooker. What had gone wrong with these two mighty peaks that they should suddenly shrink seven thousand feet in altitude? and how could any one, even a botanist like Douglas, make so monumental a blunder?

We asked ourselves all sorts of questions and got no answers that satisfied us, as we made our way down the valley toward the Athabasca. That two commonplace mountains, lower by two thousand or three thousand feet than some of their neighbours to the south-east, should masquerade for generations as the highest points in North America seems absurd; and it is not surprising that Dr. Collie ten years later should wonder if we had not reached the wrong pass, and should make a new search for these high mountains.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Stuttfield and Collie, "Climbs and Explorations in the Canadian Rockies."

## CHAPTER XXV

### HOMeward BOUND

OUR return trip to the Athabasca was uneventful except for wet and wintry weather. At a camp half way to the main river we found in a ruined log shanty, a board with pencillings of some agent of the railway exploring parties in 1872, speaking of the snowy weather and of the dog trains coming in.

Following too closely the edge of the Whirlpool River at one place, the bank caved under my horse and we rolled over almost to the water. Just afterwards clumsy Pinto stepped into the same hole and plunged right into the river, swimming across to a bar in the middle, so that we had to set up the boat and paddle after him. The same evening we ferried across the Athabasca, finding it still so high that the ponies had to swim in the middle.

One morning when the ponies were tracked and brought in by Frank, Pinto was missing. But our loads were now light and none of us was sorry to lose him, so we left him behind. Though he was more trouble as a packhorse than all the others

## The Canadian Rockies

put together, we immortalised him by giving his name to an exquisite lake near the head of Cataract River.

The grouse chicks were now in good trim for broiling, and Stewart secured a number of them, most delicious after a constant diet of rusty ham or bacon.

After our disappointment on Athabasca Pass, we determined on a holiday trip to rejoice our eyes once more with beautiful Fortress Lake ; and there we opened out the folding boat for a bit of comfortable exploration, rowing to the farther end to see its outlet toward Wood River. The little canvas punt was no racing shell, but in three hours, taking turns at the oars against a gentle head wind, we covered the eight miles, and landed to look down the densely wooded gorge leading toward the Columbia Valley in the distance. The lake has splendid surroundings, including Misty Mountain with its great glacier and the snowy pyramid we thought last year might be Mount Hooker, and is immensely more impressive than the poor little Punch Bowl between insignificant Brown and Hooker.

While I loitered at the outlet, Stewart and my brother followed its clear waters down to a muddy larger river coming from a glacial valley to the north, the headwaters of Wood River, and afterwards did some climbing to get a broad view at this end of Fortress Lake. Unluckily, smoke was drifting up from some forest fire in British Columbia, hiding all the distance, and they came



OUTLET OF FORTRESS LAKE.

To face p. 210.





## Homeward Bound

back to the outlet in the evening without adding much to the map. It was dark before dinner ended, and our eight miles' row back to camp was made through the night, past formless, dusky shores and vaguely outlined mountains, and we had no end of trouble picking a way through shoals and floating timber at the end.

A half-moon suddenly came out from behind Fortress Mountain and somewhat enlightened our darkness, but it was one o'clock before we got home, and Frank had given us up and gone to sleep long ago.

Next day was Sunday, so we got up late, picked a few berries, watched ducks of two kinds feeding tamely a little way off, and heard the loneliness of the lovely spot voiced by the wail of a loon. A short distance down the shore we found that a little digging would send the waters of the lake into the Athabasca by an open-air channel instead of the present subterranean outlet.

Since its discovery Fortress Lake has been visited by three exploring parties, those of Wilcox, Habel, and Mrs. Schaeffer; and more recently lumber-men have taken up the region as a timber limit. If they have their way, the most beautiful lake in the Rocky Mountains will be desolate.

Now that the Grand Trunk Pacific Railway is pushing through Yellowhead Pass, this lake can be reached by a horseback journey of not more than fifty miles, and an excellent trail could be put through without much trouble.

At the time we were there no other white men

## The Canadian Rockies

had ever visited the valley, and, so far as we could learn, only one party of Indians, headed by that born explorer Job Beaver, had been before us. He was certainly the most enterprising of the Stonies, chopping trails into new valleys with as sharp an axe as a white man, and I have always been sorry not to have met him. We had followed his trails for many miles, and last year Jimmy used to say in Cree "Joby chungo" when we asked about any scrap of trail picked up beyond the usual limit of Stony travels.

On our return to Morley, there was sad news of Job Beaver. His elder son, who had travelled for a time with us on our way home last summer, died of that scourge so fatal to Indians, consumption. Job was inconsolable, and the white men of the region say committed suicide in his grief, while the Indians hint that Job was not right in his head before he died.

Handsome young Samson, who had visited us with Mark Two-young-men, was now the head of the family.

During our three days' holiday on Fortress Lake we had followed one of Job's trails over rough ground along the north side of the lake, and found the fallen teepee poles of one of his old camps near the outlet of the lake.

On September 4th we started for home. It was high time, for our supplies were very low, but with light ponies and familiar trails we expected to make good time.

As far as the Saskatchewan we had the usual

## Homeward Bound

succession of muskegs, rock slopes, mossy-floored green bush, and turmoil of fallen trees in the burnt timber, and found that even in our short absence fresh trees had fallen across the path and sometimes had to be cut out, though we were willing to go any distance round to avoid using our dull axes. Not even an Indian could surpass our avoidance of extra labour. Going up Jonas Pass a hustling west wind was blowing through the enchanted forest of black and white trees, leafless and barkless, and it was inhabited by imps that shrieked, hissed, whistled, and howled as we passed. Now and then an over-strained tree crashed down amongst its fellows, and we were glad to escape with nothing worse than a little chopping.

On Cataract Pass the snow slide made us more trouble than on the outward journey, since it was now loose and soft from the summer sun, and it took the ponies half an hour to wallow through a half-mile of it.

On the Kootenay Plains Stewart left us to run down the Saskatchewan in the canvas boat, so we apportioned to him his share of the dwindling supplies, and bade him goodbye with some anxiety as to his trip down the rapids and swift currents to Edmonton. He had 250 miles of river before him, and the little 12-foot craft with its dingy green canvas looked very frail for such a journey; but we afterwards learned that all went well, and that Stewart had only one regret: he had failed to hit a grizzly which he fired at on the shore.

We were sorry to part from Stewart, the most

## The Canadian Rockies

trusty, active, and cheerful of fellow-travellers, and a man of cool nerve in emergencies ; but it was a relief to the ponies to be rid of the boat, our most troublesome pack, for two of our animals had sore backs from carrying it during our last few days of bad trails and rapid travel.

The Saskatchewan had fallen so as to be fordable, and Lucius led the way skilfully over branch after branch till we reached the eastern shore, our feet somewhat wet from the depth of the water, but otherwise none the worse.

Provisions had so nearly reached their end that we made a forced march of thirty-five miles from the Saskatchewan to the Clear Water, travelling four and a half hours in the morning, and as many in the afternoon, and crossing two passes three thousand feet above the valleys, halting late in the evening at the point named by Chief Jonas on our outward journey "The-camp-where-the-fox-stole-the-teepee-poles."

Sibbald is called Fox in Stony, and he had committed the crime of chopping up teepee poles for our fire, finding no other dry wood handy. It is really unfair to the Stony women to burn the poles, which they have often cut in some distant grove and dragged a mile or more before they could make camp.

On our way down the pass to the Red Deer Valley we saw the first recent evidence of men, fresh horse tracks ; and then, through the woods, noticed ponies tethered, with saddles on the ground near by. The trees opened as the trail began to



## Homeward Bound

slope down into the valley, and below us on the yellow prairie of the Mountain Park stood twenty-one lodges, a temporary village, some of the teepees brown with years of use, others cones of clean white almost to the top, from which the smoke curled. Not far off there were spots of varied colour on the dun grass, where perhaps a hundred ponies were feeding.

Just then my horse shied, and I saw an Indian woman gathering firewood among the trees. Then he shied again because a little girl with a still tinier one in the blanket on her back suddenly appeared beyond the bushes.

Before long we drew near to the camp, where dogs barked and children shouted, and for the first time my horse Andy refused to follow the trail. It led through the village, and he and the other ponies were panic-stricken at so much bustle.

Frank's pony, Possum, showed least trepidation, so Frank went ahead and the rest dashed after in a wild trot, breaking into a frantic gallop as the village dogs sprang out yelping after us. The women and children laughed and shouted and wondered, and we swept past them into the prairie without a word of salutation on either side.

This large party had just come from Morley after treaty payments, and the men were off for the hunt when we passed.

Our horses were now very footsore and would trot only on the yielding prairie turf or the softer trails through the wood ; but we had to urge them on, for the flour was all gone, and we were living

## The Canadian Rockies

on short allowance of boiled rice and apple-sauce. There were plenty of grouse sitting temptingly on low spruce branches, but Stewart had taken his rifle on the boat journey to Edmonton, and we failed to get any with sticks and stones.

Our last day was rainy, but we kept on with the usual journey, lunching at Little Red Deer and trotting into Morley in the evening, drenched and hungry, but happy to get home. We had made the 210 or 220 miles from Fortress Lake in just ten days, with an average of more than twenty miles a day, very fast travel on mountain trails.

Frank Sibbald, our packer and general helper, was worth twice as much as Jimmy Jacob and Mark Two-young-men put together. He was not only an excellent horseman and as skilful in tracking a strayed pony as an Indian, but a very fair camp cook; and his uniform readiness and good-humour added much to the comfort of a journey in which every side of a man's character and physique is often sorely tried. Sibbald has since developed into a prosperous ranchman.

During the journey home my damaged knee hampered me so much that most of the work fell on the others, who loyally did their utmost to keep things moving, and in this my brother's share was most efficient and indispensable.

Though our main ambition had been satisfied in the climbing, by Stewart and my brother, of Mount Brown and of the mountain nearest to the position on the map of Mount Hooker, their very

## Homeward Bound

modest height had been a sore disappointment, and in night camps on the way home before going to sleep we seldom failed to speculate on the extravagant estimate that had ruled so long in the atlases.

The solution of the mystery was given years later by Dr. Collie in "Climbs and Exploration in the Canadian Rockies," a most delightful book in every way. He had the good fortune to find Douglas's Journal, published in the Companion to the *Botanical Magazine*, vol. xi., pp. 132-7, with an account of the journey over Athabasca Pass in 1827 and the climbing of Mount Brown.

Douglas is quoted as saying :—

"Being well rested by one o'clock, I set out with the view of ascending what seemed to be the highest peak on the north. Its height does not appear to be less than sixteen thousand or seventeen thousand feet above the level of the sea. After passing over the lower ridge I came to about 1,200 feet of by far the most difficult and fatiguing walking I have ever experienced, and the utmost care was required to tread safely over the crust of snow. . . . The view from the summit is of too awful a cast to afford pleasure. Nothing can be seen, in every direction as far as the eye can reach, except mountains towering above each other, rugged beyond description. . . . This peak, the highest yet known in the northern continent of America, I feel a sincere pleasure in naming 'Mount Brown,' in honour of R. Brown, Esq., the illustrious botanist. . . . A little to the south-

## The Canadian Rockies

ward is one nearly the same height, rising into a sharper point ; this I named Mount Hooker, in honour of my early patron, the Professor of Botany in the University of Glasgow. This mountain, however, I was not able to climb. ' The Committee's Punch Bowl ' is a small circular lake twenty yards in diameter, with a small outlet on the west end, namely, one of the branches of the Athabasca."

It is not surprising that Professor Collie adds :—

" If Douglas climbed a seventeen-thousand-feet peak alone on a May afternoon, when the snow must have been pretty deep on the ground, all one can say is that he must have been an uncommonly active person. What, of course, he really did was to ascend the Mount Brown of Professor Coleman, which is about nine thousand feet high. These two fabulous Titans, therefore, which for nearly seventy years have been masquerading as the monarchs of the Canadian Rockies, must now be finally deposed."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Loc. cit.*, pp. 151-4.

## PART VI

### *A MONTH'S HOLIDAY, 1902*

## CHAPTER XXVI

### BRAZEAU MOUNTAIN

NINE years passed before my next visit to the Rocky Mountains, and in the meantime others had done much climbing and exploring in the parts near the Canadian Pacific Railway, and several delightful accounts had been published of travel and adventure in our Rockies. My thoughts during summer heats in the east had often run longingly to the high slopes above timber-line where snowbanks were just melting and the spring flowers of July were hustling one another in the race to get their blossoms open first. To think of 80° or 90° in the shade in a starched shirt, when one could be on a bare mountain-top looking over a thousand square miles of rock, snow, and ice, and green, dusky valleys, with a clean wind sweeping past from the snowfields!

The month of August was to spare in 1902, and my brother, the rancher, and I planned a little expedition to a mountain we had looked longingly at but never visited. Starting along the



## The Canadian Rockies

old trails, we would branch off at a new valley and refresh ourselves with unsoiled slopes and summits.

The expeditions into the mountains since our earlier explorations had all started from points farther west, especially from Laggan on the C. P. R., but we held to our old route, following the Mountain Stony trail, through the tumble of foot-hills with their valleys floored with meadow or muskeg, to the Red Deer River, then through the lower eastern mountains to the Clearwater and the Saskatchewan, after which we followed our own devices.

This route is longer, but has several advantages over those from Laggan, such as a drier climate and better beaten trails, a greater variety of scenery, and often picturesque meetings with the Indians following up the mountain sheep in the summer.

We found many changes in the trail, due to time and the cutting of the streams, which had been unusually busy during a succession of rainy seasons, but little that needs description. The strawberries were ripe and delicious on the lower levels, the roses were past, but harebells and wild peas and vetches were full of colour and tempting to loitering ponies.

The spruce-groves with their boughs grey-bearded with lichens were as solemn and cool as ever, and the burnt tracts were worse than ever, since more trees had fallen. In one place we found the Clearwater, belieing its name, now muddy

## Brazeau Mountain

and quite out of its bed, spreading in a dozen small channels through the woods.

On the passes to the north all the flowers were in blossom—white, yellow, and red heather, anemones, low buttercups, saxifrage, yellow columbine, and monk's-hood, reduced to a minimum, with one full-sized dark blue cowl on a stalk two inches high. There was a snowstorm on the pass and then hot weather on the Kootenay plains, where we found fifteen lodges of Stonies camped this side of the Saskatchewan, waiting for it to become fordable. Usually at this late time in the summer it is crossed with no trouble. To avoid the work of putting together the boat and ferrying I got Samson Beaver, now a married man with a family in a teepee near by, to come as guide to the ford, which he had looked at the day before.

Samson can talk no English; he was too sad a truant from the Mission school as a boy ever to learn it; but his sister Becky, a smiling, bright-faced girl, came along as interpreter. While we were securing Samson I met our former guide, Jimmy Jacob, who looked no older than before.

Evidently the Indians had decided to cross the river too, for they were just breaking camp in picturesque confusion, dogs barking, women taking down the canvas from the conical frame of poles and looking up piebald or buckskin ponies to pack their household gods upon, while the men were saddling up their riding ponies.

We went on without waiting for them, Samson riding ahead, to the ford, where the muddy

## The Canadian Rockies

Saskatchewan is split into half a dozen branches with long, low-wooded islands between. To test the ford Samson dropped his garments behind a bush, and mounted his horse stripped to his breechcloth, so as to swim with less trouble if the horse got beyond his depth. He was a very lively and graceful bronze statue as he rode into the water, but still the exact opposite of a Samson. A half-hour later our guide returned, splashing and glistening, to take the lead across the river, and we followed, the horses sinking to their breast, meeting no mishap except for one pack pony which edged too much down-stream and had to swim for a while, wetting its pack but doing little damage. Samson caught sight of a bear on the mountain-side half a mile away, and Burwash was so eager to join in the chase that we waited for the hunt, Becky staying with Mrs. Coleman ; but Burwash's pony Buck neighed so continuously on leaving his friends that the bear took warning and got away.

The Indians had already shot three bears, one a grizzly, as well as some sheep, so we had bear meat for breakfast and mountain mutton for dinner, for which Samson and Burwash were on hand, the former smiling as ever and bargaining for bacon as part pay for guiding us across the ford.

We left the level prairie of the Kootenay plains, now lively with fifty or sixty Indians, 150 motley-coloured ponies, and dogs too numerous and active to count, and began our journey up the Cataract River to its forks, following a bad trail, seldom

## Brazeau Mountain

travelled of late years. We scrambled down the side of the steep canyon of Coral Creek and wound our way up to the hilly mountain flank beyond, keeping Sentinel Mountain behind and passing on the left Minster Mountain, near whose foot the northern fork of the Cataract River comes in from the unexplored valley we had planned to follow.

On our way we had more chopping than had been expected, since many trees had fallen in the burnt wood. At one point I looked ahead and saw a mountain ram with shaggy coat and a fine pair of horns facing me a hundred yards off as if to dispute our passage. Burwash got his rifle and came to the front, all excitement, but his shot missed the ram, who disappeared without loss of time, giving no chance for another shot.

Turning north-west into the unexplored valley, we advanced over all sorts of difficulties, here and there cheered by an elusive bit of trail, very old and evidently not travelled for many years, since the teepee-poles found in two places on grassy spots were completely rotten. The valley ran between a ridge of rooflike mountains of slate sloping steeply toward us on the north-east, and a row of four fine cathedrals with splendid walls and buttresses on the south-west. We named them the Cloister Mountains, to match the Minster Mountain across the main fork of Cataract River.

After ten miles of straight valley the north fork splits up into small streams heading in little lakes or glaciers, and there we kept on our course north-west, clambering by zigzags up a steep, wooded



## The Canadian Rockies

slope to 7,200 feet, where we camped just under timber-line. We were on the brow of the hill with the valley opening below us, and several great springs gushed out near by, forming thick beds of travertine. Across the valley there were two small glaciers and several little lakes, jewels in their rich blue and green, and above them rose the lofty cliffs of the Cloisters.

The lakes are as beautiful as Lake Louise at Laggan, though a little smaller, and occupy basins carved by the ice when the snow-line was lower than now, toward the close of the Ice Age. The lowest stands at seven thousand feet, with forest-covered shores, and after a striking waterfall there is another rock-enclosed lake above timber-line fed by streams from a glacier near by, while a third, on a tributary stream, is the most striking of all, since on one side a cliff rises 1,500 feet above it.

My brother climbed without much difficulty the mountain north-west of our camp, determining its height at nine thousand feet, and naming it Mount Frances.

Next day we continued our route north-west, soon rising above the trees and pushing over easy moorland slopes toward the lowest yoke in the mountain wall.

We had not gone far before a flock of seven sheep appeared on the rocky slopes to the south-west, almost invisible in their kaki disguise when on the actual rocks, but rather conspicuous on patches of green. At first they were grazing and moving along quite unconscious of danger, but



## Brazeau Mountain

afterwards they saw us and began to run ; I felt inclined to respect their privacy, but Burwash had not brought his rifle for nothing, and could not resist going after them, while the rest of the party kept the caravan in motion.

He did not expect to drop far behind ; but it was hours afterward before he came up on the trot, greatly elated. He had left his pony tethered, and followed up the sheep, taking cover behind rocks till he was within range, and had shot his first bighorn and dragged it to the trail, but could not get it on his wild little pony. Going back with my quiet nag, Jones, who takes everything philosophically, even the smell of blood, he managed to tie the sheep to the saddle and overtake us before evening, tired out with travel and excitement, but in fine spirits.

Meantime we had passed beyond the ragged tree-line spruces, dwarfed and deformed by centuries of strife with the storms, had picked a way across the soaked moorland turf of alpine plants, and had crossed a lichen-covered talus of limestone, torturing our unshod animals.

In front of us was the steep ridge of crumbled slate which formed the yoke, sweeping in a graceful curve between the cliffs on either side of the valley, and crossed by sheep-tracks. Getting down from our saddles, we made the climb on foot, leading the riding ponies and driving the struggling pack beasts up the incline. Their feet sank deep into the scree at every step and we had to give them time ; but at last the two or three hundred feet of

## The Canadian Rockies

ascent were accomplished, and we made a long halt for breath on top of the yoke.

We stood 8,600 feet above the sea, and before us lay the wooded Brazeau valley, the river itself being two miles off and nearly three thousand feet below. Above and around us there were splendid mountains, some reaching at least eleven thousand feet and carrying snowfields and glaciers ; but most interesting of all was Brazeau Lake to the north-west and Brazeau Mountain in the distance beyond it, with its gleaming snowfield, the largest in the region, the goal we had set ourselves in the beginning.

The pass thus far had been fairly good, but what lay before us on the way to the Brazeau? So far as we could see there were snowfields and steep slopes of talus below us to the north, beyond which there was a sudden dip toward the valley. It was late in the afternoon. Should we risk the unknown descent or go back the way we came?

We decided to go ahead, and soon our ponies were stumbling or slipping on their haunches down the steep incline over soft snowfields or loose debris that rolled and slid beneath them. Reaching the valley of a snow-fed stream, we had rather better going, until this cut its bed down a canyon, and just below tree-line plunged over a vertical fall of a hundred feet or more.

After trying in vain to pick a way over the mountain we at last led our tired ponies down the rocky bed of the torrent almost to the edge of the fall, and then two men dragged them

## Brazeau Mountain

up on the rocks to the right, while the third man urged from behind. We found ourselves on a small shelf with some grass and scattered trees above the main forest belt of the valley, and were happy to pitch camp as the darkness fell. It would have been too heartbreaking to go back after coming to the very edge of the valley, and we were not sorry to have run the risk ; but the route cannot be recommended. Cataract Pass to the south-west, on the main valley of the river, is decidedly less dangerous.

We were still 1,500 feet above the Brazeau, but stayed for a Sunday's rest in our eyrie among the scrubby spruces above the valley before going down the river. Water was hard to get, and the horses had to wander for pasture, and it rained most of the day, yet we enjoyed our situation. Burwash had butchered his sheep, the meat proving delicious after a steady diet of bacon, and was preparing the skin and skull with the horns for transportation. Although it was only a moderately good head and was an awful trouble to pack, he seemed happy. The sixty or seventy pounds of good meat helped out our rations famously, and not a pound of it was wasted under Mrs. Coleman's skilful management.

On Monday morning, with a drizzle still falling, we dragged our unwilling ponies through wet underbrush and dense woods to the bottom of the valley, where we came out once more upon a well-beaten trail, the best since leaving the Saskatchewan. This was followed only for a few miles to

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the forks, where we forded and turned west to Brazeau Lake, passing rapids with two hundred feet of fall on the way.

Every mountain lake has some attraction, if nothing more than the reflection of the peaks around; but much of the shore of Lake Brazeau had been burnt, and compared poorly with Pinto Lake, twenty miles to the south-east, and still more so with Fortress Lake. The mountains around looked more impressive than usual, however, with the fresh snow which had fallen as low as timber-line in the last day or two; but this presaged bad going for us on our expected climb.

For five miles we followed a trail along the shore of the lake with the brown cliffs and snowy summits of the Poboktan Mountains on the other side, and then lost it where it was most needed in the woods beyond, coming to a fullstop six miles up the valley at the foot of a huge moraine of limestone blocks as large as a cottage. This walled the valley from side to side except where the river had dug itself an impassable canyon, and it looked as though we should get no farther with horses.

After wasting much time exploring, a way was found among the boulders, and beyond the moraine there opened an enchanting little valley, 7,000 feet above the sea, with half a mile of prairie for the horses, with groves of stunted spruces for fuel, and as a water supply a clear stream leaping from a cliff and filling a pond, beside which we camped. The pond had no visible outlet, but drained, no

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doubt, through the boulders of the moraine to the river below.

The valley seems to have belonged to the river before the Ice Age, but the great moraine had forced it to find a new channel in the canyon to the south.

From our beautiful camp ground we had a broad view of the mountain and icefield four miles to the north-west, and arranged for an attack upon it next day. For various reasons we were late in starting next morning, so that by the time the valley had been skirted, a desolate lake passed, and a rocky ascent climbed to the edge of the glacier the sun began to be strong.

The icefield is broken by a long and precipitous mountain ridge beside which we had planned our course. The going was good for a mile on the bare glacier until the snow was reached, but this proved to be soft in the sun and the steep slope meant very heavy walking. Tiring of it, the mountain-side was tried, but turned out to be worse still, so we returned to the slow trudging through the snow, and at one o'clock had reached the upper end of the ridge, where we halted on the rocks for lunch at 10,100 feet as shown by the aneroids.

The highest point of the mountain rose in sheer cliffs above a very wild valley less than a mile ahead, and we changed our course so as to attack it by a snow-slope on the south side. At this elevation the walking was fairly good, though we had to make a circuit round some large crevasses.



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Soon the slope became stiffer, so that the footholds were hard to make, and finally the steep surface of loose snow, softened by the south-western sun, began to slip in great sheets on a layer of ice beneath, threatening to sweep us with it.

Halting on some projecting rocks at 10,550 feet, we held a council of war and decided that further climbing was too dangerous to risk. From clinometer readings made at our earlier halts the top of Brazeau Mountain, as we named it, is about five hundred feet above our stopping-point.

From our perch on the rocks there was a magnificent view of the central Rockies, including the Columbia icefield, and the bearings of a number of points were taken; but to fix exactly the mountain summits mapped by Collie twenty miles to the south proved very difficult.

Just below us lay the Brazeau snowfield, eight miles long by four broad, swelling into two white domes toward the south and sinking away to dirty surfaces of ice in the valleys to the east. From its glacier tongues several muddy torrents flowed, joining to make the head-waters of Brazeau River. Toward the north there was a profound and desolate valley whose outlet we could not see, while to the west we looked down into the green valley of Poboktan, or Owl Creek, a tributary of the Sunwapta, the eastern branch of Athabasca River. We had followed this valley on our first journey in search of Mount Brown.

The mountains toward the east were somewhat lower than to the south and west, but almost every



ON THE BRAZEAU GLACIER.

To face p. 239.



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peak in sight carried snowfields and glaciers, none of them, however, except in the far south, as large as the one we had crossed, for Mount Brazeau is a somewhat isolated peak, with no mountains of equal height for a number of miles around.

Glissading on the steeper slopes and wading through soft snow on gentler parts, we made haste to reach camp before nightfall, but had one mishap before leaving the snowfield. Taking the lead and following our morning's footsteps somewhat carelessly, I plunged through the snow into a large crevasse which had seemed well bridged on the way up; but my alpenstock happened to cross the chasm as I fell, and my brother and Burwash tightened the rope and quickly helped me out of an uncomfortable position.

After more than eight hours on the snow we were glad to reach the rocks again between the ends of two glacier tongues. We raced past the dreary little lake, halted a few minutes to watch a flock of five mountain sheep with a big ram at the head skim up a terrific slope of rock as if they never needed to take breath, and reached camp just at dusk, where Mrs. Coleman, a little anxious at our lateness, had a satisfying dinner of mountain mutton waiting for us.

It was now August 21st and we could afford only one day more at Moraine camp before turning homeward, and used it in studying the icefield and its surroundings, wading the muddy river where it is split into many channels in the way usual at the front of the ice. At one point the glacier

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descends over rocks to the valley in a splendid cascade of blue ice with daring seracs fifty feet high, in other places the lower end is gently sloped and partly buried under clay and stones.

The ice is retreating, as in almost all the Rocky Mountain glaciers, leaving bare, striated surfaces of rock still uncovered even by lichens for several hundred yards. Beyond this are moraines with a beginning of green, and two miles away, near our camp, is the great moraine with short, stubby trees two feet through that must have taken root centuries ago, for near timber-line growth is very slow.

Climbing up an easy slope on one of the glacial tongues, I made my way toward an island of rock rising through the snowfield, and was surprised to find on the way a small flock of birds like sand-pipers breakfasting on insects picked from the ice, no doubt driven up by the wind from the warmer valley to perish here of cold.

The island of rock, or nunatak, was a crag a few acres in size a mile and a half from the edge of the icefield, and was probably not so very long ago buried under the glacier; but it now had its plants and animals, a little world enclosed in white. Beside the expected lichens and mosses were three flowering plants, pink campion, short-stemmed daisy-like blossoms, and a low plant with a yellow, composite bloom. A few flies had escaped the dangers of the glacier and were on hand to do their duty to the flowers as carriers of pollen from plant to plant. In the sun toward the end of



## Brazeau Mountain

August things seemed cheerful enough, but more than three-quarters of the year must be winter.

A rather stiff snow slope led up to a col toward the south-west, where one could look down into an intensely green little valley leading to Poboktan Creek, and from this point, 9,800 feet above the sea, I turned back to the lower edge of the glacier, waded the streams, now much deeper because of the day's thaw, and went west down the valley to see the canyon cut by the united river, an almost impassable gorge even for a man on foot.

The Brazeau snowfield is the main source of the river, which flows for thirty-five miles through the mountains and joins the Saskatchewan out on the plains. A smaller part of the waters of the snowfield goes west and north to the Sunwapta, and thus reaches Mackenzie River, so that its drainage is divided between Hudson Bay and the Arctic Ocean, more than 1,500 miles apart.

On our way home from Brazeau Lake we followed Cataract Pass, and found it in worse condition than in former years from the fall of trees. It seemed to have been very little travelled since our last journey, perhaps because Job Beaver, the man of energy in his tribe, was no longer with the living. The events of the way, the usual incidents of rapid mountain travel with ponies, need not be recounted; but my brother and I looked with interest to the peak beyond Pinto Lake, marked Mount Coleman on Collie's excellent map.

We arrived at Winnow, near Morley, punctually on the last day of August, rounding out the month,

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in which about 250 miles of rough trail had been covered without guide or packer. The lady of the party had shirked none of the hardships of the journey, and had effected a marked improvement in our camp diet.

Proctor Burwash, though this was his first experience in the mountains, proved quite equal to the work, and displayed with pride, after his return to the east, the skin and head of his first mountain sheep.

As tangible results of the journey we had explored and mapped a snowfield of thirty square miles and two valleys not before travelled by white men; but the real gain was the filling of our lungs with mountain air, besides renewing our acquaintance with mountain trails, those capricious, tantalising, exasperating, and yet wholly seductive pathways, leading through bogs and fallen timber nowhere, and yet opening out the sublime things of the world and giving many an unforeseen glimpse of Nature hard at work constructing a world.

If one halts by chance anywhere on a mountain pass, all sorts of thrilling things are going on around. Lovely flowers are opening eagerly to the sun and wind of Spring—in mid-August, with September snows just at hand, a whole year's work of blossom and seed to be accomplished before the ten months' winter sleep begins. Bees are tumbling over them intoxicated with honey and the joy of life while it is summer. Even the humming-birds, with jewels on their breast as if straight from the tropics, are not afraid to skim up the mountain

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sides, poise over a bunch of white heather, and pass with a flash from flower to flower. The marmots with aldermanic vests are whistling and "making hay while the sun shines," and one may see their bundles of choice herbs spread on a flat stone to dry, while the little striped gophers are busy too. Time enough to rest in the winter.

Everything full of bustle and haste and of joy, what could be more inspiring than the flowery meadows above tree-line when the warm sun shines in the six weeks of summer! The full splendour and ecstasy of a whole year's life piled into six weeks after the snow has thawed and before it falls again!

Higher up even the snow itself is alive with the red snow plant and the black glacier flea, like the rest of the world making the most of summer; and as you take your way across the snow to the mountain top, what a wonderful world opens out! How strangely the world has been built, bed after bed of limestone or slate or quartzite, pale grey or pale green or dark red or purple, built into cathedrals or castles, or crumpled like coloured cloths from the rag-bag, squeezed together into arches and troughs, into **V**'s and **S**'s and **M**'s ten miles long and two miles high; or else sheets of rock twenty thousand feet thick have been sliced into blocks and tilted up to play leap-frog with one another.

And then the sculpturing that is going on! One is right in the midst of the workshop bustle where mountains are being carved into pinnacles, magnifi-

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cent cathedral doors that never open, towers that never had a keeper—all being shaped before one's eyes out of the mighty beds and blocks of limestone and quartzite that were once the sea bottom. You can watch the tools at work, the chisel and gouge, the file and the sandpaper. All the workmen are hard at it this spring morning in August ; the quarryman Frost has been busy over night, as you hear from the thunder of big blocks quarried from the cliffs across the valley ; there is a dazzling gleam on the moist, polished rock which craftsman Glacier has just handed over to the daylight ; and you can watch how recklessly the waterfall is cutting its way down, slicing the great banks of rock with canyons !

It is inspiring to visit the mountains any day in the year, but especially so in the July or August springtime, when a fresh start is made, and plants, animals, patient glaciers, hustling torrents, roaring rivers, shining lakes are all hard at work rough-hewing or putting finishing touches on an ever new world.

## PART VII

### *FROM LAGGAN TO MOUNT ROBSON, 1907*

## CHAPTER XXVII

### CHOOSING A ROUTE TO MOUNT ROBSON

MOUNT BROWN and Mount Hooker had been dethroned from their undeserved place among the mountains of Canada and had sunk to third-rate plebeians, lower than scores of other peaks in the Central Rockies. Collie's map shows a dozen mountains reaching eleven thousand feet or over within a hundred miles of the Canadian Pacific Railway, and there are probably hundreds that reach ten thousand as compared with the paltry nine thousand feet of Mount Brown. But very few aspire to twelve thousand feet, and probably no peak in the region explored rises above 12,500, though several had been estimated in earlier times at thirteen thousand or fourteen thousand feet. Each one when climbed or carefully triangulated had to descend below the fatal limit of 12,500 feet.

In most mountain regions there is a curious law of Nature forbidding supereminence for any one peak, so that a single mountain is seldom permitted to rise thousands of feet above its neighbours.



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Generally dozens of peaks approach the limit within one or two thousand feet, and a few come still closer, so that the highest is not more than a few hundred feet above its rivals.

There are reasons for this law which need not be discussed here. In brief, it may be said that to be a head taller than your neighbours means a greater likelihood of having your head sliced off.

The rumours, therefore, of the unrivalled height and splendour of Mount Robson, fifty miles to the north of Mount Brown, did not entirely carry conviction. Had it not been over-estimated also?

When the Alpine Club of Canada was founded at Winnipeg in 1906 Mr. A. O. Wheeler, the first President, suggested that my brother and myself should visit, and if possible climb, Mount Robson to settle the matter.

Mount Robson was, of course, no new discovery, for one had only to turn up Milton and Cheadle's "North-west Passage by Land" to find a glowing description of it, published in 1865.

At the Grand Forks of the Fraser they write :—

"Immediately behind us, a giant among giants, and immeasurably supreme, rose Robson's Peak. This magnificent mountain is of conical form, glacier clothed and rugged. When we first caught sight of it, a shroud of mist partially enveloped the summit, but this presently rolled away, and we saw its upper portion dimmed by a necklace of

## Choosing a Route to Mount Robson

light, feathery clouds, beyond which its pointed apex of ice, glittering in the morning sun, shot up far into the blue heaven above, to a height of probably ten thousand or fifteen thousand feet.

“It was a glorious sight, and one which the Shushwaps of the Cache assured us had rarely been seen by human eyes, the summit being generally hidden by clouds.”<sup>1</sup>

This almost ecstatic description of a peak shooting up ten thousand or fifteen thousand feet into the heavens looked decidedly exaggerated, and the illustrations in the book give to much lower mountains quite absurd pinnacles and precipices, so that one naturally doubted the evidence as to Robson.

However, in the Report of the Geological Survey of Canada for 1898, James McEvoy, a cool scientific observer, puts the height at 13,700 feet, and its elevation above the Grand Forks of Fraser River at over 10,500 feet.<sup>2</sup> McEvoy's distant photograph of the peak looked seductive, and still more seductive was the fact that apparently no white man had ever set foot upon the mountain. Those who mentioned it had looked upon it only from the Grand Forks, several miles away.

The highest mountain in the Canadian Rockies, known for more than forty years, passed within a few miles by explorers, geologists, and the location engineers of three trans-continental railways, and yet never actually visited by a white man! The finest virgin peak in America awaited conquest.

<sup>1</sup> Pp. 252-3.

<sup>2</sup> P. 15 D.

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We made up our minds to reach and climb Mount Robson if it were at all possible.

The best way to reach the mountain was the first problem. The Grand Trunk Pacific Railway would pass within fifteen miles of it after crossing Yellowhead Pass, but trains would not be running through the pass for years, while we wanted to go without delay.

Inquiries made from various authorities as to routes soon made it appear that Mount Robson could be reached from almost anywhere in the west. Some thought Edmonton the best jumping-off place, others favoured Kamloops or Golden or Laggan. It was comforting to find that all mountain trails seemed to lead to Mount Robson, so that it should not be hard to get there.

Now began the study of maps—vague maps, fragmentary maps—so as to settle the question of route. A little measurement showed that the shortest road from a point on the railway to Mount Robson would begin at Beavermouth on the Columbia, which was nearly thirty miles closer to the point than Golden. In a straight line Beavermouth was only 130 miles from the Grand Forks of Fraser River, but Frank Stover and I had not fallen in love with the trail when we had toiled along it with packs on our backs in the fruitless pursuit of Mount Brown. It was the shortest way in miles, but what heart-breaking miles of rock and swamp and fallen timber, not to speak of all the big rivers that had to be crossed!

The Golden route was given up, and the

## Choosing a Route to Mount Robson

Kamloops route came next in apparent brevity ; but so far as could be learned no one had ever travelled directly from Kamloops to Mount Robson, and no one knew just what difficulties lay in the way.

As all the western routes were abandoned, the choice lay between Edmonton, Morley, and Laggan. The road from Edmonton was the longest of all, ran much of the way through uninteresting country, and was reputed to be mostly over muskegs. My brother and I abominated muskegs, from whose miry depths we had dragged many a pack pony, and the Edmonton route was eliminated, so that the question was narrowed to a choice between Morley and Laggan as starting-points.

The Morley route, the old Mountain Stony trail, we knew well for most of the way, since we had already travelled it several times, and we had even reached a point on Miette River within fifty miles of Mount Robson on our last expedition to Mount Brown ; but the Stony trail was falling into disuse, since the Indians had nearly destroyed the mountain sheep ; and it was no longer easy travelling. It was forty miles shorter to go from Laggan than from Morley ; and there were other reasons in its favour ; all the white explorers of the mountains had started from Laggan, so that everywhere trails had been worked out through the mountains. Were they not all marked in red on Collie's map ? A white man's trail is usually better blazed and cut out than an Indian trail, and, finally, starting

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from Laggan we should pass through territory new to us and highly praised by every visitor for its mountain scenery.

From Laggan, therefore, the start should be made, and we should travel through the heart of the Rockies, making the direct journey from Bow Pass on the Canadian Pacific to Yellowhead Pass on the Grand Trunk Pacific. No former expedition had ever done this, which would be an added point of interest.



## CHAPTER XXVIII

### THE TRAIL NORTH FROM LAGGAN

PROFESSOR STEWART could not go with us, and we arranged with Rev. George Kinney to join us as a third partner, since three are better than two for mountain work. My brother provided the necessary ponies, and secured Jack Boker, a stalwart English rancher, to come along as packer. The outfit was to come from Morley to Laggan by trail in time to start northward about the 1st of August, since my fieldwork in the east would keep me till the end of July.

On August 1, 1907, I arrived at Laggan, but found that the ponies had been delayed, so that it was the 3rd before a start was made. This gave me a chance to go up through the groves of pitch-pine to beautiful Lake Louise, known to all travellers who halt on their way through the Rocky Mountains. Twenty years before I had scrambled up to the lake, then lonely and unnamed, and had loitered on its shore where now great beds of orange and yellow poppies were in bloom between the chalet and the water. Looking lakewards, the scene was unchanged. The

## The Canadian Rockies

woods and cliffs and mountains and glaciers were as faithfully mirrored now as they had been before throngs of tourists from all over the world halted for a day or two at the comfortable hotel.

The cirque in the mountains beyond, above Lake Agnes, is still as clean a cupful of snow as it had been, and the sky-line of mountains reaching ten thousand or eleven thousand feet was serene and unchanged; for you cannot vulgarise high mountains and snowpeaks.

We started north with ten ponies, six carrying packs, and of the two possible routes, up Bow River valley or up the valley of the Pipestone, chose the latter on the advice of a well-known "out-fitter" who knew the mountains well. The season was wet and the Bow valley had many muskegs.

These trails had been followed by several parties of distinguished mountain-climbers from Britain and the United States, and had been more or less cut out and put in order, so that we hoped for plain sailing. Alas! before we were three miles out of Laggan a pack pony was mired, and we had to perform the familiar and exasperating process of unpacking the animal in the mud, dragging it out convulsively struggling to dry land, and then repacking. Moreover, Pipestone Creek was full, and fording it was not a joke, so that Maria lost her foothold and had to swim, wetting her pack. It was, however, cloudy and showery, which meant falling rivers, for things work by contraries in the mountains, dry weather and hot sun rather than rain bringing down the floods.



LOOKING UP PIPESTONE VALLEY FROM MOUNT RICHARDSON.



## The Trail North from Laggan

The scenery along the Pipestone is fine; the mountains are fairly high with small glaciers, but are generally of the "writing-desk" type, scorned by some British climbers for the ease with which one can ascend the moderate slope of the "desk." Most of the north-eastern ranges of the Rockies are made up of tilted blocks of this kind, with splendid cliffs toward the prairies and gentler slopes to the south-west.

We were ascending toward Pipestone Pass, jack-pines had ceased, the spruces were becoming gnarled and stunted, and the open ground was often blue with larkspurs or red or yellow with the Indian paintbrush.

We camped picturesquely not far below timber-line, and in the morning met our first misadventure, when Boker, going to the stack of saddles before breakfast, put his hand under the canvas for something and snatched it out again filled with porcupine quills. The enemy was soon dispatched, but that hardly atoned for the saddle that had been gnawed and almost destroyed.

We were soon rising above timber-line in a rapid climb to flowery meadows, and then over bare slopes to the col, occupied by a large snowfield at a height of 8,300 feet, where the trail vanished as usual, though the general direction was evident. After several miles of snow and sodden bushes we reached stunted timber again on Sifleur River, in the midst of a heavy snowstorm which hid the surroundings, though slackening now and then enough to show dim glimpses of high and snowy peaks, probably of Mount Hector and Mount Molar.



## The Canadian Rockies

At our first camp on the Siffleur a broad blaze on a tree bore an inscription proving that shortly before a party had travelled here in great state, with twenty horses, a dog, and a chef named Muy. With only ten ponies and no dog we could only balance things by claiming four chefs.

At lower levels rain fell instead of snow, but was even more uncomfortable, so that the weather by no means suited us, while our rate of travel was slower than we had planned, and we were disgusted to find that some of the ponies were getting sore backs. We were all green to the work, and it takes some time to fall into the routine of skilful packing. "Throwing the rope" and adjusting the "diamond hitch" are arts so hard to learn and so easy to forget!

When leaving Laggan it was discovered that two axes had been forgotten, and to replace them I had bought from a lumber-man one of the two-edged or double-bitted axes often used in the woods. To one used to the common single-edged variety these axes are troublesome, and Boker had the ill luck to cut his knee rather seriously, making us short-handed for hard work.

With our various troubles it was the sixth day before we came down over moraines and broad, yellow terraces to the Kootenay plains on the Saskatchewan, where we speculated as to whether we should unroll the canvas boat and ferry across or go up stream and reach a ford of which we had heard.

The trail up river looked well beaten, and we followed it, leaving behind the prairie flowers of the

## The Trail North from Laggan

plains, but soon regretting our choice among heavy fallen timber on a steep wooded slope. However, we pushed on, with enchanting glimpses of mountains under a sunny sky, and of intensely coloured lakes in the valley below us, basins of indigo with emerald margins, or of black with rims of brown, green, and yellow, according to the source of their water, in a glacial stream or in a muskeg. These colours were quite unnaturally vivid, pools of unmitigated colour that needed softening to blend properly with the landscape. The Saskatchewan itself flowed as a turbid green flood, often broken by flat, gravelly islands, just at the foot of the ridges we followed, which were lateral moraines left by the giant glacier filling the valley in the Ice Age.

We were at the gathering of the waters which unite to make the great Saskatchewan, the broad river that for the rest of its life flows 1,200 miles across the plains to Lake Winnipeg, and then, under the name of Nelson River, discharges the melted snows of the Rocky Mountains in Hudson Bay 1,600 miles away.

Passing to the north of Mount Murchison, thought by Hector to be thirteen thousand or fourteen thousand feet high, but reduced by the iconoclast Collie to the more modest though still respectable height of 11,100 feet, we forded Bear Creek, a clear and rapid stream, and then crossed the southern fork of the Saskatchewan, broad and muddy, but spreading, fortunately for us, in several channels over a wide flat, so that our ponies had

## The Canadian Rockies

no trouble in fording. After leaving Bear Creek we no longer had the footprints of the party of twenty horses to guide us, as they probably came down by the Bow route and returned by the Pipestone.

Following an old trail over open grassy hills between the two arms of the river, we presently found it necessary to cross the north or main branch, which we dreaded a little. All went well, and we were soon travelling north-west, but with trouble here and there where torrents, now almost dry, had ploughed chasms in the coarse gravel of the valley slopes. These small ravines were steep-walled, and as we were climbing out of one my riding pony, Betty, broke through the bank with her hind feet and fell back upon me, pinning me down under her until the others came up and rolled the mare over. Fortunately, nothing worse came of it than a bad bruise.

On the way up the north fork we had the usual rainy weather, heavy showers pattering on the tent at night, and light fugitive ones driving up and beating in our faces at least once a day while on the trail, making things damp and miserable, but furnishing fine cloud scenery about the mountain-tops and keeping all the waterfalls in prime condition to spring as bridal veils from the lofty cliffs.

The gravel flats customary in a glacially-fed river near its source spread broadly out beneath tremendous walls of rock, sometimes even two thousand feet high, and we had to pick our way, usually with no visible trail, fording one arm after another to keep on a reasonably straight course

## The Trail North from Laggan

up the valley. Our unshod horses now had not only sore backs but sore feet, and were very troublesome to keep in motion. A buffalo-bird which had adopted us kept flitting from pony to pony to pick off flies, often within a few feet of the drivers, whom she watched out of a bright and friendly eye, but avoided too near an approach. I tried a snapshot of her on Topsy's neck, but without success.

We were now passing Mount Coleman, as shown on Collie's map, but the lofty wall of cliff prevented any view of its summit. Camping just beyond the great cliff at a spot where there was a little pasture, a porcupine perched in a tree just over us like a grey lump of rubbish was shot for the sake of our precious saddles, and dropped dead to the ground.

We had nearly reached the head of the Saskatchewan, and, following instructions, turned aside from the river, now an easily fordable creek, and clambered up a very steep trail through the timber. A thousand feet of climbing, stiff work for the pack horses, brought us to fairly level side-hill trails, with marvellous views of mountains and canyons and a splendid waterfall, which seemed to spring out of an opening in the rock, apparently the source of the main branch of the Saskatchewan.

Pushing on toward the watershed between the Saskatchewan and the Athabasca, we camped late in the evening on a flat of boulder clay above the valley, where there was grass for the horses.



## The Canadian Rockies

Next morning the regular night's rain had turned the clay into mud, and then snow began to fall heavily. We knew from the map that there was a camp ground a little way beyond, and my brother walked on to see if there were not some better place to spend Sunday than our present mud and slush. To his astonishment he found a party in camp near by—Mrs. Schaeffer, Miss Adams, and their guide and packer.

When the horses were rounded up to be saddled, Topsy, a regular misanthrope, avoiding human or equine society, was missing, and no amount of searching in the glades between the snow-laden spruces brought to light the black mare. When the storm was over we left camp without her, intending to come back and look her up.

With snow driving fiercely in their faces it was no easy matter to hold our ponies to the trail through the matted bushes. Presently we met Mrs. Schaeffer's party coming like ghosts out of the grey, but it needed such strenuous work to keep our beasts from turning back with them that our greetings were of the briefest, and soon they were out of sight on their way southwards.

To make a comfortable camp in the snow took a good deal of time, and when our tent was up and a big fire was blazing we were surprised to see two people riding up through the trees, Mrs. Schaeffer and her outfitter, Warren, with dejected little Topsy in tow. They had picked her up on the way, and, like true friends, had brought her back lest she might follow them to the next camp.



## The Trail North from Laggan

It was a delightful surprise to have a charming woman ride in out of the snow in the midst of the Rockies and join us at our lunch of bannock, bacon, and tea ; and we got some very useful hints for the future from our guests, for Warren is an experienced and resourceful man who knows most of the mountain trails that can be reached from Laggan. We were interested to hear that they had lately been at Fortress Lake, apparently the fourth party to visit that beautiful sheet of water. They reported bad trails needing much chopping on the Sunwapta.

Though it was the 17th of August when we set about gathering brush for our bed that evening, all the trees were Christmas-trees, and even dry branches from under the spruces got snowy while one was carrying them to the tent. In the midst of the snow my brother saw a humming-bird poising over the flowers beyond the grove, evidently bound to have honey in spite of the storm. The buffalo-bird seemed to have deserted us, however.

Sunday saw the end of the blizzard, and presently the sun came out, slowly melting the soft snow from the valley, but leaving all the upper levels clean and white, so that Mount Athabasca opposite was dazzling when the cap of clouds drifted from it. In the afternoon the shallow valley had dried up and we picked strawberries on the sun-warmed slope.

Whiskey-jacks had looked us up and made themselves a nuisance, attacking the bacon when they got the chance, but they are such jolly birds that one's resentment is not very enduring.

## The Canadian Rockies

As our loads were heavy and some of the horses had sore backs we cached the folding-boat and fifty pounds of supplies, enough to take us home from this point, in a thick spruce-tree, fastening everything up tight in bags to keep out winged or four-footed marauders. We hoped thus to make better time.

This cache we were fated never to see again, and if some later traveller has not lifted it from the crotch among the branches of the old spruce, it may be there still in its waterproof wrappings. It is very likely, however, that the whiskey-jacks and the squirrels may have found their way into it before this and have made away with the flour and beans and bacon, but the canvas boat must have tried their patience, if not their digestion.

On Monday morning we climbed through the stunted spruces to Wilcox Pass, crossing to a small tributary creek instead of the main river, which is lost in a canyon for the first few miles. The pass is high and was snowy after the storm, but overhead there was brilliant sunshine, lighting up Mount Athabasca most dazzlingly in its fresh white, and we thought it one of the most splendid mountains we had seen. In former journeys we had gazed at it from twenty miles away.

With the sunshine our buffalo-bird turned up again, perching on the horses' manes or hopping on the ground in front of us as I led my horse up the pass, as if to hurry us out of these inhospitable heights ; but when we reached the valley she finally deserted a party that knew no better than to get up among the snows.



NEAR TIMBER LINE, WILCOX PASS.



SUMMIT OF WILCOX PASS, MOUNT ATHABASCA IN THE BACKGROUND.



## CHAPTER XXIX

### THE TÊTE JAUNE TRAIL

AFTER two hours above the timber the trail turned recklessly down a steep slope to the creek, where we camped in the woods, on a romantic spot near Collie's Sheep Camp, driving the horses half a mile to pasture on a bare grassy hillside.

Down the valley the trail came out on the Sunwapta, or eastern branch of the Athabasca, as it is put on some maps, but some miles above the part we had explored in earlier years. It is typically glacial here, with a wide flat of coarse gravel on which many tangled branches meet and part, a labyrinth of water-courses, full or empty according to the time of day, requiring ford after ford from one bare strip of gravel to another. As we advanced down stream the gravel got finer and was mixed with streaks of sand, and this was followed by stretches of sand mixed with clay, ending in muddy flats bordered with swampy meadows enclosing a stagnant lagoon or two. The whole was a perfect example of the sorting power of running water.

At the mouth of Jonas Creek, a boisterous torrent



## The Canadian Rockies

down whose valley we had once travelled, a fan of stones and gravel had been piled, almost filling the valley and crowding the Sunwapta, here quite unambitious, to the other wall, and making us considerable trouble. And now began the well-remembered fallen timber and rock slides varied with swamps and muskegs of the Sunwapta. The black pony Topsy abominated soft spots and several times jumped into the river to avoid a mud hole, when some one had to splash after and persuade her forcibly to scramble up the bank again.

To find a better trail we took the risk of fording, though the river was high, and a mile afterwards ran into a worse tangle of fallen trees than before. Gradually, however, we worked down the wide synclinal valley between low mountains, to the falls, and at last approached the main Athabasca, where we hoped most of our difficulties would be over. We could look up the Chaba valley and admire Fortress and Quincy Mountains and the Mountain of the Cross, and we talked over old struggles among the unknown peaks around Fortress Lake while in search of the fabulous Mount Brown.

In the main Athabasca valley, after the two branches met, our road was good at first, over morainic ridges burnt nearly bare, but beyond the second falls in the canyon our hopes of rapid travel were dashed again, for the burnt and fallen timber was more abominable than ever, and in one slimier muskeg than usual several horses were mired at once. We turned up the side of the valley to escape

## The Tête Jaune Trail

the bogs, and there had to chop a way by main force through piled up logs hidden from sight by a forest of young pitch-pines ten feet high.

A fine silver-tip bear came out to look at us from the other side of the canyon while we were in search of a feasible route across the creek, but with the usual courtesy of the grizzly he turned quietly into the woods again.

We had passed the mouth of Whirlpool River, and on August 28th, two weeks after our expected time, came out of the fallen timber of the moraines upon the belt of prairie-land along the Athabasca, so as to cross over to the Miette valley and make the sharp turn westward to Yellowhead Pass. Hitherto our course had been north.

We had been disgusted to find the upper Athabasca valley burnt and the trail ruined by fallen trees during the years since we had been there before; but the promised land was now in sight after our long battle with outrageous trails, and we should soon be on the well-beaten road used by hundreds of packers and railway engineers on their way from Edmonton to the Tête Jaune Cache.

As our canvas boat was snugly fastened in the branches of the spruce on Wilcox Pass, we tried to ford the Athabasca at points where it looked broad and shallow, but every time the water was too deep, and we did not care to emulate the courage of Mrs. Schaeffer and Warren, who calmly swim on horseback to cross a deep river, coming out wet but safe on the other side. We might have risked the water for ourselves, but could not trust the pack ponies with the supplies.

## The Canadian Rockies

Then we remembered the halfbreed Warren had mentioned as keeping a canoe a few miles down the river to ferry people over, and two of the party trotted down the trail along the beach to look for him, but came back without finding either halfbreed or canoe. They did not go far enough, as we learned afterwards.

A raft was the next thought, and we picked out a good place a mile or two down the shore, and came back to move our camp to the spot; but when the ponies were rounded up three were missing. That meant a hot half-day searching for them over miles of grassy glades among the trees, until we were in despair, when they turned up at last quietly resting in the shade within fifty yards of the trail.

We followed the bank for two miles before dropping our loads beside a lovely small lake in a little amphitheatre beside the Athabasca, and on the way we heard strange music, the sound of bells across the river, and on the other side we saw horses grazing. After days of snowy passes and tangles of fallen logs, the peaceful sounds and the meadows with pasturing horses seemed enchanting. We had reached civilisation again.

The raft was finished in a couple of hours, and half an hour later the tent was rising on a bit of dry turf near the gravel beach where we landed, and the dripping ponies had found a path up the side of the beach and were disappearing in the direction of the bells.

In the dusk after supper we followed the ponies

## The Tête Jaune Trail

up the path through the trees to the grassy bench and walked a mile or two towards a fire, where the party whose horse-bells had charmed us in the distance were camped.

There were three men in charge of twenty-one horses, packing in supplies for the railway engineers locating the line of the Grand Trunk Pacific.

We had a long chat beside their fire, hearing little about the outside world, but learning all the ins and outs of the trail to the Tête Jaune Cache, and of the worries of packing 200 lb. each on eighteen horses. Tête Jaune in the mouths of all western men has become "Teet John," which I thought at first meant "Petite John." Their wages of \$50 per month seemed well earned in that endless campaign against swollen rivers and muddy trails and obstinate horseflesh, but they were contented and in good spirits. Their board came out of the supplies they were packing, and they were saving their wages to take up land half-way to Edmonton.

We stumbled back to our camp by the river, and next morning made a rush to get off before our neighbours, since we intended to travel faster with our light loads; but in spite of their eighteen horses to pack they were gone before we reached their camp, and it was a couple of hours later before we caught up to them where a narrow bit of trail winding through trees made it impossible to pass the train.

After the silences of former trails it was strange to hear the shouts and jeers and whistlings that



## The Canadian Rockies

seemed indispensable to keep the caravan in motion even at their slow rate of two miles an hour. One man rode ahead, and each of the other two had to keep nine hungry, used-up animals on the move. The man in the rear was a German, and his prayers, entreaties, and commands in broken English as he rode just before me were at first funny and at last unspeakably tiresome. The ugly pack beast, Maud, the most woebegone of the lot, was his special tribulation, and when she got absolutely mired in crossing a muddy creek flowing into the Miette, his rage and pathos would have been comic if we had not been in a hurry and exasperated by the delay.

We helped poor mud-spattered Maud out of the hole, and soon after managed to get ahead of the pack train.

Once past them, the trail was a joy in its picturesque variety. Sometimes it followed rocky ridges in the sun, where the mountain rims of the valley stood bare against the sky on each side, then it slipped down into the green twilight of spruces and balsams on the low ground or tunnelled through thickets of willow and alder, once in a while fording the Miette at some shallow place where it rustled mildly over a gravel bar. The water was so absolutely clear that every pebble could be seen on the bottom. Evidently no glacier fed its headwaters.

After the vanishing trails of the past, it was an enormous comfort to follow a well-beaten road impossible to lose ; and after days of hard chopping



## The Tête Jaune Trail

in slashes of fallen timber on the untravelled ways of the mountains it was a joyous relief to fasten up the axes and travel on a well-cut-out path that needed no adjustment. There were drawbacks, however, to the Yellowhead trail. In the soft parts it was too well beaten down by hundreds of hoofs into pools of foul mud with the odour of a dung-hill, and sometimes just to one side lay the festering carcass of a beast that had gone that way once too often.

After a day full of interest and variety for back-woodsmen like ourselves, we camped twenty-one miles up the valley on the Dominion prairie, where the ponies had miles of good pasture, a little yellowed by autumn, for it was the last day of August.

Here we stayed for Sunday, and our friends the packers, who knew no Sunday, came in that evening, having made the distance in two days.

They were up early on Monday morning, and we could see them across the creek methodically saddling up and quickly flinging a hundred-pound pack on each side of the raw-boned animals. They once more got off before us, so that we had another experience of following up the noisy rear of a pack train, till an open space let us go by.

Before we knew it we were at the watershed on Yellowhead Pass, where clear streams flowed over gravel beds among the timber, and three bench-marks made by the engineers of three great railway lines announced the summit.

They did not agree very well as to level, showing 3,747, 3,682, and 3,722 feet, the last bench-mark

## The Canadian Rockies

being that of the Grand Trunk Pacific. This is the lowest parting of the waters in the Rockies, except Pine River and Peace River passes still farther to the north, and in three or four years the trans-continental trains of two railways will probably be running across the divide that we had reached only after a month of hard travel.

We passed into British Columbia over a quick descent through fallen timber, and came out on the shore of beautiful Yellowhead Lake, reflecting the handsome peak of Mount Pelée toward the south-east, while Tête Jaune or Yellowhead Mountain rose to the north. For Alpine scenery the pass will not compare with Bow Pass on the Canadian Pacific Railway, since the mountains along the Miette are low and almost free from snow.

Four miles below Yellowhead Lake we reached the famous Fraser River, already bustling and important, much larger than the Miette and muddy from the drainage of the glaciers on Mount Geikie, which rises to eleven thousand feet a few miles to the south-east.

The trail led down the Fraser Valley at the foot of Yellowhead Mountain, crossing boisterous creeks, fording Moose River, nearly up to the horses' backs, and running for a mile or two along a steep hillside above rich, marshy meadows where the river was building its delta at the head of Moose Lake. Here all pack trains have to halt for a night, since the worst part of the Tête Jaune trail lies along the north shore of the lake with no pasture for eight or ten miles.

## The Tête Jaune Trail

We splashed across a muddy channel from the trail at the foot of the hill to the sandbar at the end of the delta, and in a few minutes our ponies joined those of an earlier party feeding in the marsh. Our neighbours proved to be Mr. England, engineer in charge of the railway location, and his packer. Not long afterwards the pack train arrived, dropping its burdens in systematic order, and the twenty-one horses moved off to pasture with the others, so that there was a full chorus of horse-bells from the combined outfits, all ringing methodically as the animals grazed. Now and then, however, one of the bell-bearers would disturb the harmony by a furious jangling as it nibbled some point on its skin tormented by flies.

The sun set with glowing reflections beyond the lake, columns of smoke rose from our camp fires, ducks paddled about not far off, and after supper nine men from various directions met to swap month old news and compare notes on horses and trails.

Next morning by dint of early rising we were off before the pack train, climbing the stiff trail up the mountain-side above Moose Lake, where the mists still hovered. The trail went up and down among the trees, sometimes hundreds of feet above the water, with lovely pictures between the trunks, at others scrambling along a shore of angular pebbles, which our unshod ponies hated. The trail deserved its ill name.

After a hot noon halt on Government prairie, already eaten bare by earlier parties, we continued

## The Canadian Rockies

down the river, now of a clear turquoise blue after losing its mud in the lake, and boiling and leaping in rapids and falls, with a drop of seven hundred feet in a few miles.

By this time we were beginning to worry about Mount Robson. It could not be more than a few miles away, with only the low, snowless Rainbow Mountains between, yet we had not caught a glimpse of the white summit, 13,700 feet high. Had there been some mistake about its height, and were we fated to humble another giant as we had Mount Brown? Mr. Hastings has told me since that there is one point in the valley where a part of the peak can be seen, but we had missed it, probably because of cloudy weather.

We camped on a little stream coming from a ridge only three or four miles from the top of Robson, according to McEvoy's map, and hoping that the ravine might give a way up to it. Mr. Kinney and my brother employed the afternoon in climbing the valley wall to spy out the promised land.

While they were gone there was a chance to study the Fraser valley, which was typically British Columbian, for things were too luxuriant for Alberta. Spruce-trees five feet through grew near the river, and under them devil's clubs rioted among the ferns. There were all sorts of fruits—black-currents, scotch-caps, raspberries, blueberries, and saskatoons, for men and bears, and the acid little cherries and rowan-berries for the fowls of the air—so that no one need want ; but the autumn colours



## The Tête Jaune Trail

on the bushes troubled me, for we were fully two weeks late, and it was the 5th of September. Might we not be too late for our climbing?

Presently the mailman passed on his way west and stopped for a chat before going on to the engineers' camp at the "Teet John." Then there was a confused and threatening noise coming from the east and the pack train left behind in the morning slowly passed, the forlorn pack brutes splashing the mud high on the bushes as they floundered up the bank of the creek. The drivers mechanically shouted, "Hi, there!" "Whey!" "Go on ahead!" with no apparent effect on the tired beasts, and made futile slashes with their whips, to which no attention was paid. The last man, my German friend, ceased his hoarse cry long enough to tell me resignedly that three animals had been done up on the bad trail yesterday, and were left behind, including old Maud, who had delayed us in a mud hole some days ago.

The poor animals were ravenous, for the feed had been all eaten off at their last camp ground, and they were snatching at the willows by the creek. Now they had all gone by at their loitering gait of a mile and a half an hour, and the clamour died away. "Whey, there!" sounded dull in the distance, and then nothing but the music of the horse-bells could be heard.

Except for the stirred surface of the trail and the fresh mud splashes on the bushes beside the creek there was nothing to remind one of the turmoil and rank smells of the pack train. One could look



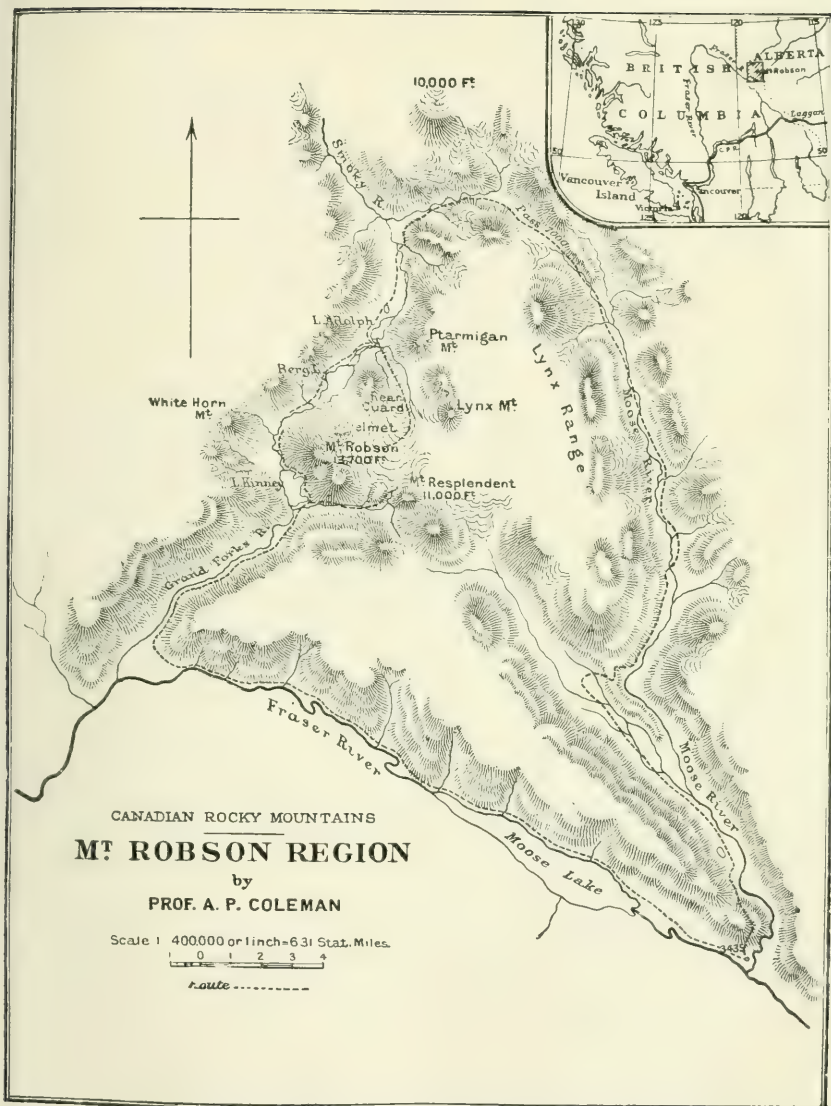
## The Canadian Rockies

up to the bright cliffs of the Rainbow Mountains or down at the blue ribbon of river once more in peace, and one woke up from a bad dream of pandemonium, but after all it was the advanced guard of civilisation which had passed along the trail.

The two climbers came down with mysterious accounts of the strange country beyond, where rain-clouds had hidden the north, breaking at intervals, but never opening up things clearly. There were glaciers beyond a valley and vague heights rising above them, but whether they had actually looked upon Mount Robson was uncertain. One thing was certain, that ponies could never be taken to Robson by that route. Our course was clear. We must go to Grand Forks and make our way to the foot of the mountain by that valley.

A few miles' travel along the lowering ridge between the Fraser and Grand Forks Rivers brought us to the turn, and at last Mount Robson burst upon us in reality, and we knew that the monarch deserved his reputation.

Six miles up the valley mighty cliffs rose, crowned by a pyramid of snow, often hidden by clouds, but now and then gleaming above them white against a blue-black sky. According to Mr. McEvoy the top was more than ten thousand feet above the valley where we were camped, and his determination did not seem excessive; so that Milton and Cheadle, in their glowing description forty-five years before, had not exaggerated when they made it rise ten thousand or fifteen thousand feet into the heavens.





## CHAPTER XXX

### MOUNT ROBSON FROM THE SOUTH

IT was delightful and inspiring to gaze on the highest peak of the Rockies, with its thousands of feet of cliffs capped with a steep pyramid of snow ; but it was also disquieting. A frontal attack on those vertical cliffs seemed hopeless, and it was clear that we must come to close quarters and try the mountain from the flank.

Without delay we explored up the valley, and found a most disheartening tangle of fallen logs separating us from the green timber near the head of Grand Forks River. Once more we had to chop our way, this time through logs of British Columbian timber often two feet or more in thickness, far worse than the windfalls of Alberta. Years ago some one had cut out a trail for at least five miles up, but it was so encumbered with fallen trees in the burnt part that we found it better to choose a new route.

Who had done the work no one knew, unless possibly the family of Shuswap Indians across the river, and none of us had enough command of the Chinook jargon to inquire of them.

## The Canadian Rockies

The green timber was impressive when at last we had cut a road to it just passable for ponies, and had picked up the old trail, which wound between big cedars and hemlocks, hoary with long, grey lichens hanging from their limbs, and deeply padded with soft green moss under foot, except where thickets of ferns and devil's clubs hid the fallen logs in the wetter places.

It was the 10th of September before we could drag or drive our ponies along the half-cut trail, where logs had to be jumped and rocks scrambled over ; and several of them had wounds on their legs before we reached the chosen camp ground among the trees by a rapid of Grand Forks River. When unloaded they were taken over a still more fearful bit of trail to a steep slope, where rank grass grew among the fallen logs. The shaded path upwards, through an almost tropical growth of bushes, made the grassy opening above the timber quite dazzling in its sunshine.

Going back to our camp beside the rapids, devil's clubs had to be cleared away under the big hemlocks before we could make ourselves at home, and I was reminded of far-off camps among the timber along the Columbia many years before. Just behind the tent, by leaning over the rapids, one could look up toward the Robson cliffs, which rose a mile or two away, but the top of the mountain was cloud-covered.

There was no time to be lost, and next day packs of about forty pounds each were made up for the attack on Mount Robson. Boker was to



## Mount Robson from the South

look after the horses, while the other three set out with supplies for five days, which, with fine weather, we hoped would serve us for the climb.

Through the bush along the river our loads were an immense nuisance, but presently we reached the forks, where we crossed the smaller branch on a log, and then had good going on the shore of a beautiful lake, which had been visited by Mr. Kinney the day before, and has been named Lake Kinney in honour of our indefatigable comrade. Here we had open views everywhere, except toward the top of Robson, which was out of sight behind immense cliffs rising for several thousand feet, but broken by rows of dark spruces where some softer layer gave a gentler slope.

Presently the lake was passed, and the valley of the main branch of Grand Forks River opened out into a marvellous amphitheatre—first the flat plain of the delta, then a climb of a few hundred feet among tumbling brooks to an upper level, with Robson to the right and an unnamed range of mountains to the left, snowy and with two small glaciers. At the head of the valley a larger glacier reached far below tree-line, and sent a tributary down to the river.

The colouring of the amphitheatre was wonderfully rich, with the greys and purples and ruddy browns of the rocks forming the cliffs, and the different tones of green on patches of forest and on bare slopes, while the waterfalls that dropped over the cliffs by the dozen made the whole scene alive with motion and music.

## The Canadian Rockies

We advanced up the valley, picking our way among the vast blocks which had rolled down from the cliffs of Mount Robson, finding very bad going until we drew near to the greatest waterfalls of all, where the main river plunged down from the north-east through rugged canyons, with a drop of two thousand feet. Looking up at the final wall of rock that ended the valley, one could see the white gleam of four or five of these falls, but the rest of the river was hidden except for spray rising here and there like mist. Where the great volume of water came from was mysterious, and we imagined rugged tablelands behind Robson to supply the drainage.

This large river, coming apparently from the skies, and leaping so easily over the cliffs, was our natural route to attack the mountain from the rear, but the sheer walls of rock were very serious obstacles for three wingless humans with 40-lb. packs. We dropped our loads and looked for a possible ascent, but in an hour or two gave up trying to scale the barrier and turned back through the chaos of fallen rocks to the lake, deciding to try the valley of the smaller branch of the river, which had an easier slope.

The flow of water among the rocks was beautiful and puzzling—clear streams gushing out of talus-heaps, flowing for a while in daylight and then vanishing again. The whole valley seemed honey-combed with subterranean channels. Near our camp, by a bay with a gravel beach and wooded shores, a huge bastion of Mount Robson rose

## Mount Robson from the South

behind a fringe of forest ; and from its edge leaped a stream for a thousand feet, its source out of sight and its lower end lost in a mass of loose rocks. It reappeared on the shore, not far from us. The air was still, but full of murmurs of running water and of little waves lapping the shore, and the night clear and soft as we went to sleep ; but our comfortable night ended in a troubled dawn, with gathering clouds, as we started next morning up the smaller branch of the Grand Forks. Our fine weather was at an end ; we had spent it all in chopping our way into the valley.

On the shore of the lake Mr. Kinney found a small dead fish, which he believed to be a salmon. If so, these fine fish must have a famous struggle up the wild rapids of Fraser River and of the Grand Forks to this mountain lake 3,500 feet above the sea. I have seen shoals of salmon, bruised and battered till they were raw and red, at nearly an equal height on Thompson River, another tributary of the Fraser, so that it is quite probable that they reach the foot of Mount Robson.

When the lake was passed, climbing began in earnest up the steep canyon of the smaller fork, bare rock encumbered with fallen logs that we sometimes followed for fifty feet. On one smooth stem a grizzly had left deep claw-marks. The packs spoiled our balance for acrobatics on the logs, and, in fact, a heavy load on the back robs climbing of most of its joys. But there were worse troubles in store, for rain began to fall, so that the smooth slopes of quartzite that reached up for

## The Canadian Rockies

a thousand feet and the limestones above them proved very slippery climbing ; and in the gentler part of the valley beyond the long grass and bushes were already soaked with water. There was no timber for about a mile, because everything had been swept down and flattened by snowslides from the cliffs of Robson. At one place a large block of stone had ploughed a long furrow through the debris of the valley floor, no doubt driven by the force of the avalanche behind it.

We were moving towards a cirque of singular beauty at the head of the valley, with cup-shaped bottom and steep sides of wonderful green, down which flowed white torrents from all sides, combining to form the little river we were following. Two of these streams, on the Robson side, drained cliff glaciers, and a third seemed to come from nowhere, spouting clear of the cliff as if projected from a nozzle. However, the valley was soon hidden from us, for sleet began to fall from the roof of clouds, dimming everything.

It was now necessary to scale the wall of the cirque towards the flanks of Mount Robson, so as to reach one of the high belts of timber where we intended to camp for the night ; and we followed up one of the cascades over glacially smoothed cliffs dangerously slippery in their wet condition.

At last we reached the timber, now half lost in driving snow. We were not far below timber-line, and it was time to camp ; but nowhere could we find a bit of level ground on the continuous slope,



## Mount Robson from the South

and we had to roll logs against two trees and build up a platform large enough for a bed before there could be any rest after an exhausting day.

It was dusk under the snow-laden spruces before we got supper and were ready to crawl into the sleeping-bags and pull up the waterproof cover.

In the morning more than a foot of snow had fallen, and it lay thick on the sloping branches and on the lower end of our bed, though the well-thatched old spruce had kept it from our heads. We lay in our bags and listened to a group of magpies in the branches above, speculating harshly about us and apparently amused at our predicament. With snow still falling heavily, and nothing visible but the nearer trees, there was no chance of climbing, and we lay till hunger drove us out to light a fire and melt snow for tea. Without birch-bark or dry wood, fire-lighting needed some skill.

It was September 14th, and we had only three days' supplies left. There seemed no hope of clear weather and reasonable conditions for climbing within that limit, and so at length we gave up the contest. We had climbed three thousand feet, and had slept a night at timber-line about a third of the way up Mount Robson (6,300 feet above sea); and before this we had explored the valleys on two sides of the mountain, but we had not once caught a glimpse of its summit. Some dim pinnacles of rock had been visible when the snow-fall slackened a little, and that was all we saw of Robson as we turned downwards toward our main camp on Grand Forks River. It was clear that if



## The Canadian Rockies

a change did not come within a few days we should be driven homeward without ever having a chance at the real mountain at all, for we had only scaled its lower buttresses and not reached its higher flanks. Our following summer's work made it probable, however, that we should never have reached the top even with fine weather, since the way is blocked by very serious cliffs on the south side.

To avoid risks on the way down we kept to the woods in the first thousand feet of steep descent, wallowing and slipping through the snowy bushes and letting ourselves down from tree to tree. Lower down the snow became moist and turned to sleet and rain, soaking us with ice-water among the bushes of the level parts and making the rocky cliffs and slopes of the canyon very risky to descend.

Five or six hours of slipping and stumbling brought us to the junction of the two river branches ; and soon after we were at home in the old tent, a little drizzle falling outside, through which the low western sun glanced now and then, while up the valley Mount Robson was robed in mist and cloud for several thousand feet, only the lower cliffs showing distinctly.

We had heard Boker shouting to the horses on the way toward camp, and presently he came back, rejoiced to see us, and we had a good dinner, with beans and peaches, and talked over all the events.

Next day it still snowed from time to time, and even the bottom of the valley was whitened,

## Mount Robson from the South

making the half-frozen devil's clubs droop dejectedly under the load of sleet, and sending big drops down here and there from the trees at whose roots our fire was burning.

We spent a depressing day in the old camp, and then, on September 16th, packed our ponies and turned towards home; but we were shocked to find that several of the animals looked quite used up, as if they had not fed properly among the fallen timber on the mountain-side. Linda especially, my brother's riding horse, a well-bred and valuable mare, was only skin and bone, and old Whitey and Maria were both lame.

We loaded what was left of our belongings on the stronger horses, and set out in doleful trim over the four miles of fallen logs; but about half-way over Linda collapsed altogether, and had to be left behind. She had lost all heart, and made no effort to follow the others.

Next morning my brother and I came back to see if she had not revived enough to be helped along to the meadows near the forks. She whinnied to us as we came up, and tried to eat a little grass we had brought, but no pushing nor pulling could help her over the fallen logs, and to save her from worse suffering she was put an end to. Her death scream will always be a distressing memory to me.

This seemed the final blow in our defeat, and rankled in my brother's mind as we passed for the last time over the trampled moss and the dull red of rotten wood on our disastrous trail.

## The Canadian Rockies

Our last glimpse of Robson showed clouds driving past a vast cone of white, broken in the lower parts by bands of nearly horizontal cliff ; and then we turned up the Fraser valley and saw no more of the fascinating peak that had cost us so much toil. Often we talked over the camp fire of what might have been done if we had reached our point two weeks earlier, as we had hoped to do in the beginning, and often planned ways of attacking the mountain from the rear instead of from in front, for we were thoroughly beaten and naturally wanted another chance under better conditions.



MOUNT ROBSON FROM THE NORTH, AT 5,700 FEET.



MOUNT ROBSON FROM THE SOUTH-WEST, AT 3,000 FEET.





## CHAPTER XXXI

### SWIFT AND HIS NEIGHBOURS

ON our return to the Athabasca we had all the look of a defeated army, and poor old Whitey came limping in two hours after the other animals had been unpacked, in spite of the fact that his load had been divided among the rest.

It was very late in the season, and we felt obliged to hurry; but our crippled horses made this very difficult, especially as the mud holes were worse than ever and, except on the larger prairies, the grass had been eaten bare. Even where the grass was still untouched it did not seem to cure on the stalk as it does in the Alberta stock ranges, and had little nourishment for the horses. At night the frosts were hard, and ice formed on the pools. Our supplies were nearly done when we once more touched the Athabasca River, and we went down stream a few miles to Swift's ranch, of which we had heard much from all travellers to and from Tête Jaune Cache. Passing through the open prairie-land, sear and brown with autumn, but still having plenty of feed for horses, we decided to leave behind our two worst cripples, Whitey and Maria, in charge of Swift, since in that open

## The Canadian Rockies

country they could look out for themselves in the winter.

Swift is a most interesting character, a white man of some energy and resource who married a woman of the country, an Iroquois half-breed, many years ago, and had now a brood of wholesome-looking children playing about his log house. He had fenced and ploughed some fields, from which wheat and oats and barley had just been harvested, and had built a watermill on the stream that irrigated his farm to grind his wheat into flour, somewhat brown in colour, but making good bread; so that, except for sugar, tea, and tobacco, he was as nearly independent as a man can be.

He reached this valley in 1894, the year when we had mistaken the Miette for Whirlpool River, had seen our tracks and wondered at them, just as we had pondered over the big hoof-prints of his horses. It was strange that two parties of white men, one from Morley, the other from Edmonton, then only a fur-trading post, should so nearly have met at the sources of the Athabasca.

We had a long and interesting talk with Swift, admired the children, and the bread and potatoes from his garden, and praised deservedly the artistic buckskin suits embroidered with rich-coloured silks by Mrs. Swift—true works of art made from her own designs. We also laid in supplies, for our flour and beans had vanished and the bacon was nearly done when Swift's hospitable roofs hove in sight.

## Swift and His Neighbours

We had intended to return through the mountains the way we came, but it was now so late in the season that the snow would be very deep on the passes, and our used-up beasts were in no trim for the rocky trails through the mountains. On Swift's advice we took the trail for Edmonton, a hundred miles longer, but through more or less civilised country.

Swift's ranch was a delightful oasis of prairie in the heart of the mountains, and the brown and yellow terraces along the river might have been in the cattle country at Morley, so that we were not surprised when Swift told us that horses winter safely. The warm Chinook winds, the special providence of the Alberta rancher, lick up the snow from time to time in the winter just as they do farther south.

The broad river valley had a beauty all its own as we turned eastwards, and below the mountain cliffs there are belts of evergreen forest, pine and spruce; while among the meadows of the lower ground there are groves of aspens on the drier spots, and balsam poplars along the river, and here and there great Douglas firs rise like steeples above the other trees.

The river winds from side to side, enclosing islands at some points and expanding to lakes at others; and from the heights behind the ranch these are spread out as on a map, while other lakes, hidden among the trees, come into view. If one is to be a recluse like Swift, it is well to choose as romantic surroundings as he has done.

## The Canadian Rockies

Down the valley, and also on the other side of the river, Swift has neighbours, about a hundred in all, a colony of Iroquois half-breeds, many of them named Moberly, from a white ancestor. They are fairly civilised, and some of them are well off; and since they were introduced as hunters in the early days by the fur companies they seem to have thriven in their new quarters.

They have certainly changed many of their habits, for they are now horsemen and mountain climbers instead of men of the birch canoe and the snowshoe, like their forefathers in the eastern forests; but they seem quite as well adapted to a mountain life as the Stonies, and appear to live more comfortably.

Swift could not spare all the supplies we needed, so a few miles down the valley we called on one of his half-breed neighbours, named Iwan Moberly, a shrewd-looking, swarthy man who came out of a well-built house a little off from the river to see us.

On the way down misfortune had still followed us, and Baldy, one of the best of our seven remaining horses, suddenly went lame, leaving us in a very awkward position for the rapid journey east. We tried to arrange a horse trade with Moberly, but the only animal he would exchange was one which he admitted was hard to catch, and after half an hour of lively exercise we failed to catch him and had to go on with Baldy.

Moberly took us into his house, where the women were at work, one a very pretty girl, and

## Swift and His Neighbours

we were rather surprised to see a sewing-machine and a battered phonograph in the room, the latter singing a ragtime song in a very brazen voice.

At first Iwan answered our questions in Cree, the *lingua franca* of the plains, *nemoya* ("no") being a very prominent word; but presently he melted into very fair English, and admitted that he had nearly everything humanity could want except bacon, which he was short of; but flour, beans, rice, raisins, even some canned stuff, he could supply. Taking us into his smoke-house, we saw rows of whitefish hanging from the roof, seven big ones for a dollar, also a bony side of bear-meat, very dirty-looking, which he did not recommend because the animal was old and tough. We then went into his store, where flour and other things were measured out to us in a free-and-easy way without using the huge pair of steelyards hanging on the wall.



## CHAPTER XXXII

### OUT OF THE MOUNTAINS TO THE BIG EDDY

WITH fish and bear-meat and flour we were safe for some time, and went on, worried only by the increasing lameness of Baldy, which made it necessary for some one to walk all the time and delayed us where the going was good.

It was the 24th of September, and the autumn colouring was growing more splendid every day, the poplars taking on every rich and delicate tint, between soft green and pure gold, while the ever-greens among and behind them kept their sombre green and brown. The smaller plants, roses, berry-bushes, and mountain ash, glowed scarlet and purple, and with the fine blue and green of Jasper Lake as our trail climbed upon a rocky terrace some hundreds of feet above the river there was a marvellous display of colour, quite too gorgeous to fit with our battered and worn-out horses and dirty and tattered clothes.

There was much to enjoy even though we were coming back utterly routed, leaving behind a horse from point to point, for the route was new to all of us, with fine though not very lofty mountain forms, and the trail was in general easy to follow,

## Out of the Mountains to the Big Eddy

well beaten by all the weary pack trains that had trodden it during the summer. It was a little rocky for unshod horses, but as compensation there were few soft spots. One thing, however, roused a little anxiety. We had to ford the Athabasca with no guide to lead the way, and from old experience we knew that the Athabasca was not a river to be trifled with.

We had reached a point where one trail led down the valley, another toward the river, evidently to the ford, long and intricate, as described to us at Swift's; and we were not quite sure where to start in, for the path branched and came out at several points on the shore. Watching carefully, we tracked the latest footprints out upon a gravel beach and saw some marks in the gravel across the water, so that the beginning of the long ford made no trouble. The tracks on this gravel bar led down stream and passed into the water of a much wider stretch of river, and on the other side no hint of a landing could be seen. As the leader, I urged the reluctant Betty in and we explored in various directions, stopping short when the water reached the saddle, and at last a zigzag course following under water bars or riffles was picked out and the six other ponies followed safely. We were now on a larger island with bushes, and a trail, freshly marked, led along it to the edge of a channel with a much stronger current and nothing in sight to suggest a landing on the other side, where a thicket came down to the edge of the water.

## The Canadian Rockies

Once more the unwilling Betty was forced into the murky water, and turned just before losing her hold on the bottom; but a second trial at a new place was not so lucky, for Betty was swept off her feet and out into the current, where there was nothing for it but to swim. As Betty swims low, I slipped off and swam beside her till we reached the bushy shore, where I caught a branch and held on, still clinging to the bridle. She tried bravely to make a landing, but the bank was undercut by the swift current, and I had to let her go. She made two or three attempts to climb on shore among the bushes lower down, and then turned toward the other side, where she landed on the bar some hundreds of yards below the rest of the party, who were waiting anxiously to see what would happen.

Dragging myself up among the bushes, I immediately found a trail leading to the head of the island, above the scene of our mishap, and there on a gravel bar were fresh hoof-marks that told the tale. We should have followed a shoal a quarter of a mile up stream, and then have turned sharply downward to the head of the island. I could hardly make myself heard across the rapids, but by playing the semaphore the others soon grasped the situation, and, one of them leading Betty, presently all were on the right side of the channel. There was another arm of the river to be crossed, but this was shallow, and soon we were on solid land near the foot of the bold cliffs of Roche Miette.

## Out of the Mountains to the Big Eddy

It was early in the afternoon, but I was shivering from the icy water of the Athabasca, and besides, my aneroid and watch needed prompt aid if they were to be of any more service ; so we halted and soon two brisk fires were blazing and all the wet things, including myself stripped to underwear, were spread out to dry. The watch and aneroid were dried in time to save the hair-spring, that sensitive soul of the machinery that so quickly perishes from rust after drowning unless revived by fire. The kodak, strapped to Betty's saddle-horn, and the sketch-book and notebooks in the rucksack were not improved by their wetting and drying, but after all things might have gone worse than they did.

We were now in a region of sharply-folded mountains, and a splendid anticlinal arch, thousands of feet high, rose just across the river, a fitting doorway to a superhuman cathedral, for ever closed to man. Farther up there were synclinal mountains, where the anticlinal arches had been ruptured and destroyed, leaving what was once the bottom of the valley high up in the sky as jagged pinnacles, convincing instances of the lofty being humbled and the lowly exalted.

Other folds had been flung over on their side and had then been carved by frost and torrents into all sorts of adventurous shapes, which, though not very lofty, were far more exciting to a geologist than the huge blocks tilted up to the north-east found in the other main valleys, such as the Brazeau, the Clearwater, and the Bow.

## The Canadian Rockies

The stiff beds of limestone, quartzite, and slate of the Athabasca Mountains must have been buried under a far thicker load of overlying rock than was the case farther south-east to make them so much more plastic, and one must imagine them to have been thousands of feet below the original surface when they were crumpled and contorted into their present daring forms.

Roche Miette, round whose projecting cliffs the trail curved beside the river, is the most impressive bit of architecture along the Athabasca, pushing its bold front out into the valley like a commanding fort with unscalable walls three thousand feet high, and a flat top somewhat parapeted and loop-holed. Though it belongs to the third range inward from the edge of the mountains, the nearly vertical cliff and the square and massive front can be seen many miles out on the plains.

Beyond it to the east the lower outlying range has been severely folded, so that one mass has been named by McEvoy Folding Mountain. We lunched near the foot of this peak, where there was plenty of grass in the little openings among the poplars, so that our horses could fill up satisfactorily before entering the wooded foot-hills just outside the mountains.

In the afternoon we passed through the "gap" between the bluish cliffs of ancient limestone and turned into a black forest of spruce and pine that marked the beginning of the plains. Beyond this dark belt of evergreens our way was to lead through the parkland of poplar-groves and meadows that





ROCHE MIETTE.



## Out of the Mountains to the Big Eddy

separates Edmonton from the Rockies. The route to be travelled was unknown to us except for depressing reports that it crossed many miles of muskegs. In any case there would be soft trails for our horses, now so footsore from the rocks that they would turn out of the way to avoid the smoothest pebble.

We were far from easy in our minds as to the journey of two hundred miles still to come, for Baldy was now a limping cripple and had to be driven slowly, hobbling into camp hours after the others had arrived, while Moberly's bear-meat and smoked fish had been eaten up, leaving us again on the verge of hunger. However, we expected to reach Big Eddy, where there was a store, in about two days, and hoped the storekeeper would accept a cheque in payment for supplies, for our money had quickly vanished at Swift's and Moberly's, where prices were very high because all except fish and bear-meat and potatoes had to come in 250 miles on the backs of ponies.

A day's journey took us out through the foothills, now brownish with sear grass or bright yellow with poplar-leaves, and presently we climbed far above the valley and could look down on the blue-green of the Athabasca, winding between groves and islands. With a last look at the great river, we turned toward the McLeod valley across a divide which was abominable with mud-holes and fallen timber, but gave a fine view of the Rockies, sweeping for more than a hundred miles across the south-west, somewhat atoning for the toil and

## The Canadian Rockies

trouble. Then came a quick descent into the charming McLeod valley, where meadows alternated with groves of straight, white-stemmed poplar.

The weather had justified the westerner's pet title of "Sunny Alberta" since we had turned down the Athabasca; but reaching the McLeod cloudy skies covered us, and the only sunshine was the golden gleam of the poplar-leaves, just in their perfection of autumn colour.

We camped near the river, which is very small compared with the Athabasca, near a party of packers on their way westward with loaded ponies. They reported a snowstorm and rough weather farther east, and informed us that we were at the "Leavings" of the McLeod, one of several "Leavings" on the plains, points where the trail bends off from one river valley to another. Here my brother sold poor Baldy to the head packer, since it was hopeless to expect the crippled beast ever to reach Edmonton. It needed rest and a chance to recover, instead of the forced marches we felt obliged to make; so we agreed to take it on with us to the Big Eddy and leave it there. For some time its pack had been divided up among the riding ponies.

The next day's journey was sunless but almost dazzling with the poplars against the grey sky and with the golden pathway over their fallen leaves, making a splendour of one vivid colour such as I never before saw in nature. Our eastern autumn colours are more glorious in their range of rich

## Out of the Mountains to the Big Eddy

hues, but have not the same effect as the western poplars, here and there pierced by a spire of dark evergreen.

Of White Mud and Sundance Creeks nothing need be said, for we were hurrying to reach that metropolis, Big Eddy, which at last was announced by a chorus of horse-bells. Its two tents and one log-house lay before us, with the fine ox-bow curve of the river below ; and a picturesque medley of barking dogs and variously-coloured ponies showed that other travellers were there before us.

The French storekeeper, white-haired but rather youthful in face, welcomed us and offered supplies at prices reasonable for the region ; and as we were to leave Baldy, the fourth of our horses, it was necessary if we were to keep up our rate of travel to get another horse. We soon learned that our only chance of doing this was from John Yates, the mail-carrier, who was just making ready to start for Edmonton.

We halted a day to make rearrangements, and Yates agreed to lend us a " blue " pony for packing purposes, and also to take me on with him, by which some days might be saved, since he would travel with fresh horses. It was the end of September and I was already due in Toronto, while time was not of quite so much importance to the other three.

We had a splendid breakfast on bull trout, caught in the eddy by the Frenchman's night-line, and then I mounted little Clydesdale, so named from its diminutive size, and followed White



## The Canadian Rockies

Rabbit (Whitey for short), the pack pony, while Yates rode ahead on a powerful mare.

I was sorry to leave the old party which had loyally and good-temperedly borne so many trials and hardships together in the past two months, but they were now in good trim, with six horses for three people, and should follow without trouble over well-beaten trails. It turned out later, however, that before reaching the end of the journey another horse went lame and had to be left behind, the black mare Topsy, so that six out of our original ten died or were disabled in this unlucky journey.

## CHAPTER XXXIII

### THE EDMONTON TRAIL

So far as I was concerned, the rout was now transformed into headlong flight, since Yates was behind time with his Majesty's mails, and kept his big mare on the trot wherever the road allowed, while the pack pony was light of heel and of load and trotted most of the way also, so that Clydesdale, whose ponderous name I abbreviated to Clyde, with his short legs often had to lope to keep up.

Muskegs were all too common, and there the trail inevitably split up, each horse looking for an unbroken surface of green on the quaking bog. Whitey was specially original in this matter, always choosing a fresh route, generally through the thickest bushes, because their roots stiffened up the skin of turf, and Clyde followed her faithfully, so that often my hat was knocked off and I was nearly dragged from the saddle in the tangled byways.

Yates wanted to reach Forsyth's ranch for the night; but we were late in starting and it was dusk before the trail turned down through the woods to the river, and for the last mile or two I had to leave everything to Clyde, who followed

## The Canadian Rockies

Whitey's ghostly form through the blackness under trees until we came out beside the gleam of water. I could see nothing of a ranch, but Yates presently shouted, and as a result there was a light, the dwelling glowing from the candlelight within, and proving to be an arched wagon-cover placed tent-like on the ground. We went in and found Forsyth lighting a fire in a minute tin stove to get us some supper. Presently fried venison, bannock, and tea filled the aching void, while Forsyth explained the meat, which was out of season, by a hideous joke as to a colt which had departed this life. We found the venison savoursome in spite of the story.

Next morning Forsyth joined us on the journey, but our start was delayed because Clyde and two of his horses were hard to find. The ranch proved by daylight to be a beautiful flat with groves and rich pasture beside the clear river, and on the other side of the McLeod we could see the smoke of another party of ranchers, Englishmen banished here, but expecting the railway to bring civilisation to them in a year or two.

On the trail again, we climbed out of the valley and crossed poplar-covered hills, where the leaves had almost all fallen and the magic colour of the past few days had departed. For a day or two our path had been paved with clean, round disks of brass or gold, but now they were shrivelled and brown and drifting in windrows among the bushes. There was a shrewd briskness in the morning air and ice on the water-pail, for autumn

## The Edmonton Trail

was well under way on the 2nd of October. The day's journey was through attractive scenery, and once on the highest hill we caught a last glimpse of mountains nearly a hundred miles away.

We travelled late and camped in the red of the evening, using methods new to me, old camper as I was. A fire was lit and the baking of bannocks began, and during this operation one of the party had tied three poles together at the proper length, lifting them up as a tripod, and so placing them that the fire was in the centre. Other poles lying round were methodically stacked against them at even distances, leaving one gap, when the last pole, tied to the inner side of a semicircle of canvas, was lifted along with the voluminous canvas and laid in the missing place. Then the canvas was drawn round the cone of poles and fastened up the front with little pins of wood above the opening for the door. If it was breezy, an extra pole was put up to spread a flap of the canvas and give the right draught to the fire within. By this time it was night and the two men, who had finished their work outside, went into the teepee, where the third one had the bannock browning before the fire and a savoury stew of dried fish and desiccated potato ready to dish.

It was my first experience of teepee life, and I found the cosy firelight and the great shadows against the canvas cone behind us most picturesque, while it was decidedly cheerful to be sheltered from the chill without as we ate a jolly supper together. Henceforth it was my duty to build

## The Canadian Rockies

our house each evening, with the fireplace as focus, and I soon became an adept in the operation, while one of the others cooked, and the third attended to the saddles and gear or hobbled one or two horses.

Our forced marches were largely through park scenery, with here and there a few red-granite boulders scattered over the rolling hills, ice-borne erratics from the Laurentians, hundreds of miles to the east. The country looked fertile, and often the bottom lands were rankly grown with wild vetches and peas, from which the ponies snatched long, trailing vines in passing—good horse-ranch country, according to Yates.

We began to meet men once more, pack trains heading for the west, and at last one black, rainy evening rode into Lac Ste. Anne over a broad road where wheels had actually run. In the rainy darkness my leader trotted ahead up hill and down into groves of trees and across muddy creek bottoms, and little Clyde trotted his best to keep up, neighing to his friends not to go so fast when he fell behind. Now and then, looking up from a valley, I could see a black silhouette of a man on horseback against a grey sky.

There was confusion, followed by strong language from Forsyth, for we had run into a band of cows sleeping on the road, and the pack beasts had stampeded, making much trouble to get them together again, when once more the race continued. A house with a lighted window appeared on one side, and a door opened where



## The Edmonton Trail

a man stood framed in light from behind, asking, "Where you come from?" but before there was time to answer we were past. More houses appeared, and at last there was a hotel with lights and sounds and men, but every room was full, so I spread my blankets on the dining-room table and slept comfortably till morning.

We had reached the first outpost of civilisation, where a famous old Hudson Bay post was surrounded by a scattered French half-breed settlement, not far from the flat shores of Lac Ste. Anne.

While Yates was scouring the settlement for a team and a buckboard, I walked about this quaint little village, with the pretty whitewashed buildings of the Hudson Bay Company against a background of still yellow poplars and the grey Roman Catholic church, toward which gaily-dressed half-breeds were sauntering, the oldest Mission in this part of the west. There was brilliant sunshine and the whole scene was attractive.

We had travelled forty or forty-five miles the day before over heavy muddy trails, and my little charger Clyde had borne me famously. To keep down the load for White Rabbit, the pack pony, Yates and I put our blankets under our saddles, and for comfort in the frosty autumn nights two good blankets were not too much. Poor Clyde when saddled gained nearly double his girth and was distinctly comic in effect.

There was still a strenuous day's drive to be accomplished over roads savouring of the back-

## The Canadian Rockies

woods, but which had actually been ridged up and provided with bridges, running most of the way through land which had been taken up as farms and showed some clearing and cultivation. The settlers were largely English families, sturdy and comfortable-looking, very different from the French half-breeds of Lac Ste. Anne, and many of them were of good education, one gentleman met being a Fellow of a great English university.

We failed to reach Edmonton in one day, and passed the night at the village of St. Albert, lying in a river valley, dominated by a feudal-looking group of buildings on high ground, a Roman Catholic educational institution dating back to the times of earliest settlement, when French fathers looked after the spiritual welfare of Indians and half-breeds.

The hotel was comfort itself compared with the rough and dirty accommodation of Lac Ste. Anne.

Two hours' spin in the morning over good roads between splendid fields of rich black soil where crops of grain had been cut brought us to Edmonton, the northern capital of Alberta, and I paid my first visit to this ambitious young city, laid out with streets wide enough for a metropolis.

My funds were almost out, owing to the heavy cost of supplies along the western end of the Edmonton trail, and it was needful to visit a banker, clothed as I was in worn-out boots and a patched suit, in a city where I had no references; but a pencilled note from Boker, our packer, was my

## The Edmonton Trail

introduction, and there was no difficulty in getting what money was needed.

Before bidding goodbye to Yates, the hustler, born in England and brought up in California, I sounded him as to another expedition the following summer, and found him willing to arrange for horses if I wanted to go.

## PART VIII

### *FROM EDMONTON TO MOUNT ROBSON, 1908*

## CHAPTER XXXIV

### THE YELLOWHEAD TRAIL

ON July 31, 1908, Mr. Kinney, my brother, and myself were in Edmonton once more, buying supplies, comparing aneroids and boiling-point apparatus at the meteorological observatory, and getting waterproof dunnage-bags to preserve our special treasures from unlucky spills in the rivers.

On August 4th we were at the Hobo ranch, a few miles west of Lac Ste. Anne, John Yates's headquarters, getting an obstreperous set of ponies saddled and packed. An hour's ride away from the ranch it was remembered that our future home, the teepee, had been left behind, and also a bell, desirable to make strayed horses audible if not visible ; and Yates went back with two horses for these indispensables, leaving us to prepare lunch near a little stream. While busy in this way we observed that the other seven horses had turned east to follow Yates's pair, and we hurried after

## The Yellowhead Trail

them, but a stern chase by men on foot after lively ponies was, of course, in vain. They never stopped till they reached the Hobo again.

There John, with aid from Mr. Kinney, who had followed on foot, forced the unwilling ones back to their burdens, and we proceeded on our way late in the afternoon, camping at dusk in splendid wild-hay meadows beside Island Lake. We followed the new tête road prepared to haul in supplies for the Grand Trunk Pacific Railway, largely corduroy over swampy lowlands, but often cut straight through avenues of tall poplars. The road was so well beaten by heavy teaming that no wayfarer could err from it.

When John and Mr. Kinney came back from the ranch, whooping up the recreant ponies at a good round trot, it was evident that another member had joined our party self-invited, for Hoodoo, the pet bull terrier of the Hobo, was joyously barking in the rear and helping on the tumult.

I was sorry to see him come, for he might be a great nuisance, but there was no easy way to send him back and Hoodoo went with us to Mount Robson. He made the least possible trouble, accepted all hardships philosophically, and I have no doubt believed himself an important portion of the expedition. On the trail he was in his element, hunting a squirrel here or scenting a grouse there, always slipping back along the line and then darting forward beyond the first horse, in narrow and crooked trails dodging into the bushes on one side to escape the feet of the horses. On muskegs



## The Canadian Rockies

where the ponies floundered his light weight left him as free as air to enjoy himself, while toiling men helped the plunging ponies on to dry land.

On good trail one might see him halt somewhere near the front to look back and see if all were coming on in good order, and if there was any lagging among the rear animals he felt it his duty to go back and investigate and add his advice and persuasive powers to those of the rider in the rear. That he aided much in this was evident to himself if not to others, and he bounded forward again with a self-satisfied air to report all well at the head of the column.

I was somewhat worried for the little fellow when we forded the first wide river ; but he was quite equal to the occasion—went up stream to a good starting-point and plunged recklessly in, swimming strongly where the ponies waded, often carried hundreds of yards down, but always landing safely and trotting up to us with many a shake to dislodge the cold water. At one or two of the worst fords his master carried him, but in most cases he looked out for himself with perfect independence and a well-justified trust in his own prowess.

On the next day we reached Pembina River, where we added some trifles to our outfit at a big supply-store. We then forded the shallow, muddy river where a sixteen-foot seam of coal showed black at the foot of the bank, climbed the steep hill beyond, and were once more on an orthodox pony trail wriggling its way through groves and

## The Yellowhead Trail

meadows with soft spots uncorduroyed and hard ones ungraded, while our ponies kept snatching for mouthfuls of the rank growth of vetches and grass. Here and there larkspurs rose four feet high with rich spikes of purplish blue, and though they are reported poisonous, humble-bees were gathering honey from them, and my pony plucked and ate one stalk with no observable effects.

It was nearly eight o'clock and threatening rain when we pitched our teepee where an old set of poles lay on the border of a great natural meadow, and the mosquitoes invited themselves to share our chamber and had to be smoked out, showing that a tent with a good front of cheesecloth has at least one advantage over a teepee.

To recount our journeys and our camps is unnecessary. Up to McLeod River the trail led through the charming park scenery of northern Alberta with gentle hills and valleys, meadows and poplar-woods, threaded here and there by a creek of brown water, lukewarm in the August sun, but wholesome enough. Even Poison Creek, in its lovely and peaceful surroundings, we drank from without harm, if without enthusiasm.

Haymakers were at work in several places cutting the natural meadows and stacking up excellent fodder, which they hoped to sell in the winter for \$20 or even \$50 per ton.

After fording the cool, clear McLeod there was high ground from which we looked longingly toward the Rockies, a mere rim of faint blue at the horizon; and that night we camped at

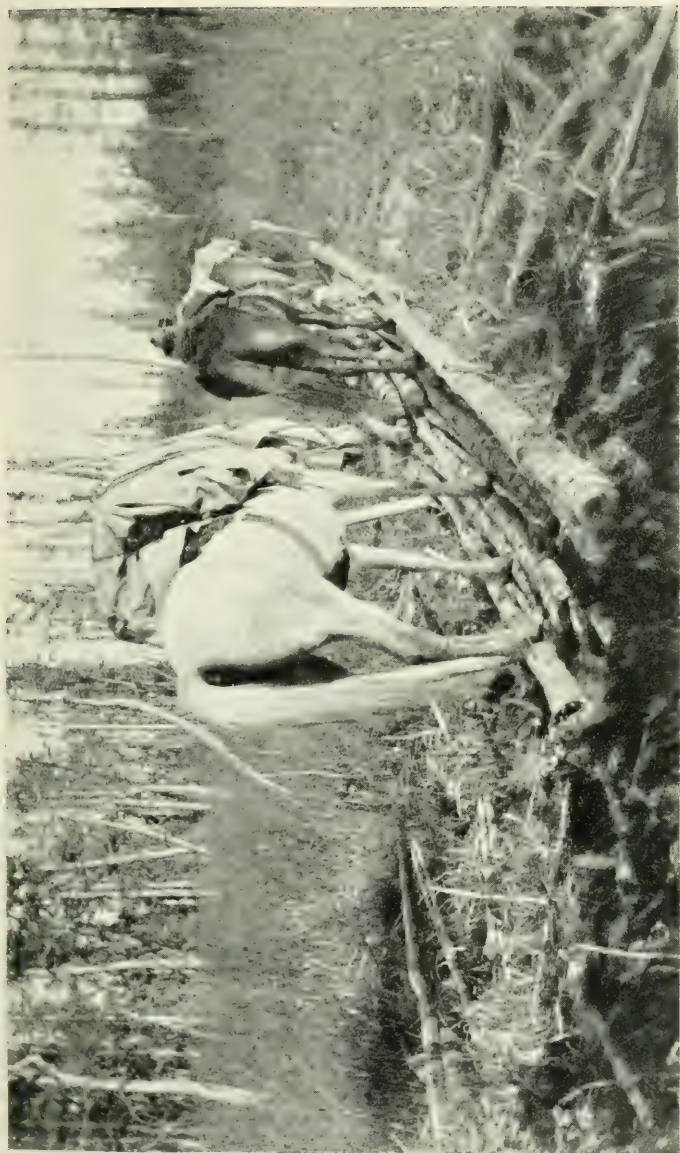
## The Canadian Rockies

Forsyth's, where John and I had passed a night the year before. Here we stayed for Sunday, giving the ponies a rest after twenty miles a day up to this point ; and along the shore of the river I found fossil tree-stumps undermined from the soft cretaceous shales of its banks. In the afternoon we forded over to the ranch of the Englishmen, who received us hospitably, and in the evening a young Bostonian living in the unchinked log house with them gave us a concert of operatic music from an excellent phonograph.

At this ranch my brother recovered Topsy, left behind totally exhausted on our disastrous homeward trip last autumn. Topsy was fat and frisky and had no intention of being caught, but at last succumbed to the rope in skilful hands, and soon after had a saddle tightly cinched and a load on her back. Evidently the winter in the open had done her no harm.

Between Forsyth's and Big Eddy came an appalling bit of mucky ground, and every animal sought in desperation for a new route through the muskeg where the sod had not yet been broken. It was a foretaste of much that was to come, for the season had been rainy.

Near the Leavings of the McLeod a stray horse was handed to John to return to its owner on Prairie Creek, and the thrifty John made it work its passage by carrying White Rabbit's load, so that she might go light and avoid a sore back. It was funny to see how our horses despised and ostracised the new-comer, even the little ones nabbing it with



TRAIL THROUGH A MUSKEG.





## The Yellowhead Trail

vicious countenance, while the big, raw-boned creature accepted it all meekly.

Our next camp was on rough morainic country beside a silvery creek, from whose transparent waters Mr. Kinney, our sportsman, extracted half a dozen rainbow trout and one bullhead, making a magnificent breakfast, before we crossed the divide to the Athabasca. On the rolling summit one hundred miles of the Rockies were once more spread before us, the lower rocky cliffs in the front ranks and the higher snowy peaks of the interior ranges lifting themselves proudly as belonging to a different, superior world from that of the grubbing farmers and haymakers of the plains. One cannot avoid a thrill at the first broad view of the mountains.

Coming down to the river the mountains were lost again behind foot-hills, and once more we trotted through rich grass fields to Prairie Creek, where the mowers were at work and where the submissive stray horse was handed over to its owners, soon to draw its share of a hay-wagon instead of carrying a pack.

Then came the imposing portal of limestone cliffs, and once more the majesty of the mountains engulfed us, the huge block of Roche Miette overshadowing us for half a day. We did not ford at the old place, the water being too high, but kept to the south bank of the Athabasca, with most varied trails, on narrow sandy ridges between blue lakes and the river, or clambering up the rocky mountain-side for 1,100 feet to avoid muskeg flats

## The Canadian Rockies

at the bottom, then zig-zagging with glorious views of valleys and mountains to the river flat again. From above we could look down on the tangle of channels and tributaries of the river and on Jasper and Fishing Lakes, the whole geography of a puzzling valley made clear at a glance.

The trail was now through thickets and bogs which none of us had traversed, and it was nearly nine o'clock and quite dark when we reached our camp ground at John Moberly's, whose dug-out canoe was to carry us across.

We spent a Sunday at this halfbreed's ranch, nearly opposite Swift's, enjoying an ancient and well-ordered civilisation in comparison with the squalid tents and shacks of the hay-cutters passed along the trail. Fields of oats were ripening, well fenced in, and cows and horses were quietly feeding or lining up behind smudges to escape the flies.

Mrs. Moberly, like Mrs. Swift, makes embroidered buckskin suits, fringed and tasselled and margined with otter fur, worth \$60 each, but far too magnificent for ordinary life. John Moberly is not only rancher and ferryman, but, like his brother Iwan on the other side of the river, keeps a store where most backwoods necessities can be purchased at high prices. We bought mainly dried and pounded goat-meat, cheap because manufactured in the country, though some of us invested in grizzly bear claws and other frontier trifles.

On our way to Moberly's two young halfbreed swells passed us in the same direction on fine horses with showy trappings, and later we made the closer

## The Yellowhead Trail

acquaintance of one of them, Adolphus Moberly, resplendent in one of the silk-embroidered buckskin suits just mentioned and with a mirror flashing on the brow of his sleek black pony. We engaged him as guide to the rear of Mount Robson.

On Monday there was trouble, since two of the horses could not be found when we wanted to cross the river ; and while we were out after the two the other six wandered off and had to be sought for in the tangle of groves and meadows stretching along the river. When they were all rounded up John Moberly pushed off his cranky canoe, hollowed out of a log of balsam poplar, and in three trips ferried us and our outfit across the Athabasca, here a broad and placid river reflecting trees and distant mountains. Before the last canoe-load was sent across the eight ponies were driven into the water and swam easily in the gentle current.

A short visit was made at Swift's, where some supplies were added to our loads ; and then we set out up the now well-known valley of the Athabasca, leaving behind the pretty settlement of Iroquois halfbreeds and the one white man. Our first camp was on Caledonia Creek, in the Miette valley, and we fared sumptuously at this time, mainly owing to Mr. Kinney's prowess with the revolver and the fishing-line, having spruce grouse and mallard as well as plenty of trout in our larder.

At our next camp, on Dominion prairie, Adolphus Moberly and his family, with some relations, joined us, being rather tardy in their start ; and henceforth our cavalcade was most picturesque, the stylish

## The Canadian Rockies

Adolphus riding ahead and a party of Indians, including men, women, children, and dogs, with a mob of ponies, following at their leisure behind. We camped at the South of Moose River, whose valley we were to follow into the mountains, Adolphus going off alone to select and blaze out the little travelled and poorly marked trail.

Moose River plunges at least three hundred feet over vertical quartzite ridges in the last quarter of a mile before reaching the Fraser valley, the falls being hidden in a narrow canyon. Though quite a large river and not easy to ford below or above the falls, the canyon is at one point only ten feet wide, so that four spruce-sticks have been thrown across as a bridge by some of the engineers. It would need a steady head to cross them, however, with the white foam a hundred feet below.

## CHAPTER XXXV

### MOOSE AND SMOKY RIVERS

WE were now in British Columbia and wild fruit was waiting to be gathered—raspberries, blueberries, and black huckleberries.

The route picked out by Adolphus zig-zagged at a steep grade up the mountain-side some distance west of the canyon and then turned toward the bank of Moose River, where I commenced a rough survey, as this was new ground. Our first camp was beside the river at 4,100 feet in most picturesque surroundings, with a view far up the valley toward a high mountain and a large glacier, while near at hand were splendid cliffs rising from the parklike river flat. We had just got our camp set when the Iroquois came cantering up in joyous confusion, the women carrying their young children in their arms instead of in the blanket on their back as the Stony women do. Beside the Moberlys there was a related family of Adairs in the party, Adair himself being rather a curious compound of civilisation and savagery, who had been educated for the priesthood in an eastern college and spoke English and French as well as his native tongue. He talked intelligently



## The Canadian Rockies

and looked somewhat delicate and refined, yet here he was living meagrely by the hunt, not more than supporting his small family, and far less efficient than brawny Adolphus, who was ignorant but a mighty hunter and a born leader.

The women of the party were handsome, and some of the children very pretty, but in accordance with etiquette they kept to themselves and we saw little of them. They were to be left behind at this camp, for which I was not sorry, since they decidedly hampered us in travelling.

Our next day's journey led up the valley north-westward toward the great icefield, with scarcely any trail, so that we had a great deal of chopping to do. On the way Adolphus shot a caribou across the river, and we forded over to the spot, where he proceeded in the most business-like way to skin and disembowel the animal, which was then covered with moss and brushwood to await his return.

The river forked near this, one fork continuing in the valley we had been following, and draining the glacier to be seen five or six miles away. I was inclined to follow up this fork, which pointed straight towards Mount Robson; but Adolphus made it clear that the other fork was best, since it would take us to the foot of the mountain instead of to a broad icefield. The English party which visited Mount Robson the year after explored this valley and reached the glacier.

Crossing over a low-wooded ridge, we reached the other fork of Moose River in a narrow and



ADOLPHUS MOBERLEY, AN IROQUOIS HALFBREED.



HALFBREED WOMAN.



## Moose and Smoky Rivers

wide valley, and followed it up for ten miles, camping at 5,300 feet near its headwaters in splendid surroundings, among mountains which had been growing higher and more rugged as we advanced, almost all of them carrying small glaciers.

When we had flung down our saddles and let loose the ponies, Adolphus caught sight of a goat on the steep mountain-side about 1,500 feet above us, and started after it, walking up the rough slope with an angle of about  $45^{\circ}$  as rapidly as most men would travel on level ground. We could watch the whole drama, the unconscious goat feeding among the bushes, the stealthy figure within two hundred yards of it, taking cover behind rocks and bushes. Then came a shot, quickly followed by another, when the goat leaped and fell lifeless, rolling part way down, and the tragedy was over. Adolphus rolled it still farther, but found it too heavy to handle, and presently came down to camp, as it was late, leaving the carcass to be cut up the next day.

I was putting up the teepee and asked him to show me how to do it properly, but he smiled contemptuously and said, "Don't know." It was woman's work, quite beneath the dignity of a man who could shoot caribou and goat.

Next day was Sunday, a chill, cloudy day with showers. Adolphus and Mr. Kinney went up the mountain and brought down the goat, which was skinned and cut up ready to dry over a slow fire, Adolphus doing the unpleasant but necessary work with the skill of an expert butcher.

## The Canadian Rockies

In the afternoon, with two others, he set off on horseback, ostensibly to follow the tracks of a grizzly, but really to point out to his companions, Mr. Kinney and John, the route toward Mount Robson; and on their return he announced that his family needed meat, so that he had to go back with the goat and caribou to save them from hunger. This was probably only an excuse to leave us, for an Indian alone is uncomfortable with white men; however, I was willing to let him go, since we were not far from our goal. Monday morning, therefore, Adolphus loaded his powerful black pony with the skin and meat of the goat, fastening it in front of and behind his saddle, and took his way down the valley, while we turned up toward the pass.

He was the most typical and efficient savage I ever encountered, a striking figure, of powerful physique and tireless muscles, and thoroughly master of everything necessary for the hunter in the mountains. His fine black horse was like unto him, and quite ruled over our bunch of ponies, in spite of being a stranger among them. Mounted erect on his horse, with gay clothing and trappings, Adolphus was the ideal centaur, at home in the wilderness, and quite naturally dominated the little party of Indians who had been travelling with us, though he was not more than twenty-one, while Adair must have been thirty-five.

Going up the valley we passed the last trees at 6,300 feet, much lower than on passes farther south; and at 6,500 feet entered a barren valley



## Moose and Smoky Rivers

filled with small, sharp bits of limestone which had slipped and rolled from the mountain to the east, while on the west rose stern cliffs and a glacier. From beneath this rock slide the headstream of Moose River flows, while beyond it an icy lake represents the real source of the stream. The actual summit of the pass is a mile or two north-east, at 6,800 or 7,000 feet, where the valley turns to the west and suddenly drops down to one of the headwaters of Smoky River. As this flows into Peace River, a tributary of the Mackenzie, we had crossed the main continental divide.

The mountains beside the pass reach heights of eight thousand and nine thousand feet above the sea.

### SMOKY RIVER.

Before long we decided to cut across a wooded ridge toward the other fork of Smoky River, which, according to Adolphus's instructions, should be followed up to its source at the foot of Mount Robson.

We turned across too soon, however, and had a rough scramble through the woods up stiff slopes, here and there broken by limestone crags, finally rising several hundred feet above the valley. On the way a terrific thunderstorm broke upon us, with rain and hail, and soon everything was streaming with water and there was a gloom like dusk in the woods, giving us scarcely a glimpse of the mountains around. Slipping and slumping through the spruce-trees, soaked to the skin, we led our

## The Canadian Rockies

ponies down to the other fork of the Smoky, a raging, muddy mountain torrent where we encountered it ; but after going up stream a mile or two, still in the pouring rain, it became evident that we were moving in the wrong direction.

We had to take a dangerous ford through a powerful current flowing over slippery, round boulders ; and then, crossing a small flat, reached another river, undoubtedly the right branch, since it had clear blue water, and we knew from Adolphus that the river we were to follow came from a lake.

This branch, too, we forded and then followed up its bank, presently coming to a splendid series of waterfalls, where we had to turn aside over precipitous slopes among scattered clumps of trees. Beyond this sudden rise in the valley there was a wide grassy flat flooded with water from the storm, and after splashing for two miles through the muddy water we came to another slight rise, with a turn in the valley toward the south-west. Here a charming little lake in the woods, with some teepee-poles in an opening near by, offered a camp ground, and as it was nearly eight o'clock and we were soaked and exhausted and famished, we camped.

We had hoped to end our journey at the foot of Robson, of which we had caught exciting glimpses through driving clouds, but to go on would have meant camping in the dark in a region soaked with water.

The steaming ponies soon disappeared behind





OUR TEEPEE AFTER A SNOWSTORM.

## Moose and Smoky Rivers

the trees, and we set to work to build fires and dry our blankets and clothes, finishing the work by firelight. At dusk the weather was clearing, and we hoped in the morning to select a final camp ground a mile or two up the valley close to the foot of the mountain.

On the morrow, however, Mount Robson, which had risen threateningly before us the evening before, was completely lost to sight in a heavy storm of rain and sleet, which turned to a snow-storm, lasting all day. Mr. Kinney sallied out through the snow Robsonwards, and returned with reports of lakes and glaciers; but the rest of us busied ourselves with cutting wood, baking bread, and drying things up round the fire in the middle of the teepee.

This snowstorm was ominous. It was the 28th of August, and we had hoped to be at Mount Robson by the 18th or 20th; so that we were several days behind time, mostly because of the slowness of Adolphus's party. Had we been delayed till the beginning of the autumn storms?

As we sat round the fire of dozy wood with nothing in sight but the brown walls of canvas and the smoke curling up to the opening where the black poles crossed at the top, chill memories came of the snowstorm that conquered us last September, and we were by no means a cheerful party. However, it was much earlier in the season, and a week's bright weather ought to make all right as to the climbing of Robson.

When at dinner-time John took the pot off the



## The Canadian Rockies

fire and gave us a savoury stew of dried goat-meat, with rice and curry, followed by tapioca and raisins, things looked more hopeful. The snow-storm could not last for ever, and we were nearly three thousand feet higher up than last year for the beginning of our climb, so that three clear days might see the work accomplished.

The fire cast ruddy gleams on the faces and blankets, and we felt very comfortable in spite of the thickly falling snow outside. For this work a teepee is far ahead of a tent, for all the cooking and most of the necessary duties of life might go on under cover ; and so, once more comforted, each turned into his blankets in his own particular quarter of the circle, piling up any extra garments on the side away from the fire ; for a teepee is simply a conical chimney, and cold-air currents must come in beneath the canvas to replace the smoky, warm air that ascends among the poles at the summit.

## CHAPTER XXXVI

### AT THE FOOT OF MOUNT ROBSON

NEXT morning the snow was melting and things were more promising, though clouds still clung round the mountains. A little journey of a mile or two past a lake and over the gravelly flat at the head of Smoky River brought us to a grove of spruce and balsam, protected by a massive shoulder of rock from the great glacier coming down from Robson. Here we should have shelter and plenty of dry wood from the dead trees, while one thread of the glacial drainage passed close to our door as a water supply, and on the lower slopes of the mountain across the valley there was pasture for the horses.

It cost some labour to shape the poles for our teepee out of the clumsy spruce saplings, short of stature and thick at the butt, according to the fashion of trees near timber-line; but at length we were snugly housed at exactly the proper place for our work. It seemed probable that the glacier would prove our best highway toward the top, and it ended on each side of us less than two hundred yards away, where the ridge of rock which

## The Canadian Rockies

protected the grove from destruction sloped down to the valley. Our camp was at about 5,700 feet above sea-level, and was less than eight miles in a straight line from where we had camped beside Grand Forks River the year before, so that it had required a circuit of forty miles through the mountains to turn the flank of Robson and place us at a point of vantage in his rear.

A more delightful and inspiring camp could not be imagined, and from our door we could look across to a fine row of mountains, rising perhaps to nine thousand feet, their peaks now and then standing dark against the sky when the clouds thinned. Between them small blue glaciers crept a little way into the gorges, below which was rock and dark timber, and then parkland where small coloured spots were the ponies feeding. Much of the valley bottom was of gravel, cut by almost numberless strands of muddy water pouring from the two branches of the main glacier behind us. To the north-west was a pretty lake, which we named after Adolphus, and to the south-west a somewhat larger sheet of water of an exquisite turquoise blue, named Berg Lake, because Blue Glacier ends in it and calves off small icebergs. The mile's space between the two lakes is the watershed, since Berg Lake drains into Grand Forks River.

Just in front of us the gravel flats were nearly bare, but both to right and left there were scattered bushes, followed by spruce-groves on old moraines, and rising on mountain-sides several hundred feet above us.

## At the Foot of Mount Robson

By walking a hundred yards from our camp into the valley Mount Robson came into view during the rare intervals when the clouds drifted away, disclosing an imposing dome of white rising eight thousand feet above our valley, the lower part banded with courses of rock. Immediately behind our little grove a half-mile of glacier flowed, separating us from the cliffs of the Rearguard, one of the subordinate peaks, which reached a height of about nine thousand feet.

Rain fell in the valley and snow on the heights day after day, making a heart-breaking delay after our last year's experience ; and as the upper part of the mountain was shrouded there was nothing to do except map the surroundings and get things ready for a start. Every morning I rose at 3.30 to look at the weather, and then turned in again when the upper part of Robson was invisible.

A study of the immediate neighbourhood gave some interesting results. The glacier was evidently in retreat, like most Rocky Mountain glaciers, for a bare surface of boulder clay and smoothed rock stretched for fifty feet between the dripping end of the ice and the last moraine, and after a depression there was a second moraine ; both were of stony blue clay, without vegetation, so that they could not have been freed from ice for any length of time. Beyond this there are more ancient morainic ridges, the first one with willow-bushes having thirteen annual rings, the next covered with spruce-trees, some more than a hundred years old, while our little corner of forest must have been

## The Canadian Rockies

screened from the ice by its background of rocks for at least four hundred years, since trees cut for wood show that number of rings.

From the end of the glacier several streams flowed, those from the south-western side all making their way to Berg Lake, while the largest came from beneath the north-eastern ice-lobe, immediately tumbling as a waterfall down a ridge of rocks and then spreading out into several branches on the fan of gravel below. Most of these branches reach Lake Adolphus, but two or three bend off to the south-west and join forces with those entering Berg Lake.

The branches feeding Berg Lake make their way to Fraser River and the Pacific at Vancouver, while the other branches flow northwards through Smoky and Peace Rivers to the Mackenzie and the Arctic Ocean, so far as I am aware, a unique instance of a river dividing and flowing in opposite directions to separate oceans.

A curious geographical puzzle attaches to this stream leaping from its ice cavern, since the region drained by Smoky River belongs to Alberta and that by Fraser River to British Columbia, the watershed forming the boundary of the two provinces. What part of the glacier and of the mountain belongs to each province?

Until our arrival at Mount Robson from the north side, it had always been supposed that the whole mountain and a large stretch of territory to the north-east belonged to British Columbia, and all the maps indicate the boundary so ; but the





VIEW FROM 10,000 FEET ON MOUNT ROBSON.



GLACIAL STREAM WHICH DIVIDES ITS WATERS BETWEEN THE PACIFIC AND  
ARCTIC OCEANS.



## At the Foot of Mount Robson

discovery that Smoky River has its head at Mount Robson transfers hundreds of square miles of mountains from that province to Alberta.

Years before, when we found Fortress Lake, British Columbia had gained from Alberta, but now the process was reversed.

The rivers on the gravel flat were most uncertain quantities, however, since after a frosty night several of them disappeared altogether, and the others were so low that one could easily leap or wade them by choosing the narrowest or the broadest places. On the evening of a warm day, on the other hand, all were full of muddy water, and once or twice we began to fear that the rivulet a few feet from our door might rise and flood us out.

One cold morning the main stream to the south of us practically ceased to flow, and one could enter its dripping cavern for twenty or thirty feet and see how things were arranged ; but the larger river, coming from the ice-cave to the north, always had a considerable volume of water, and must represent the main drainage system flowing for three or four miles beneath the ice.

At intervals between showers the longest base-line possible on the gravel flat was taped out, and used to triangulate the top of Mount Robson and several other points. Once while at this work the sun actually gleamed for a moment on its surface of fresh, white snow, dazzling against a cloudy background, and we rushed to the teepee for cameras, but found swirling cloud wreaths dim-

## The Canadian Rockies

ming the brilliance once more before the picture could be taken.

With spits of rain in the valley and on the roof of the teepee, and snow falling on the mountain, things looked gloomy ; and when we heard the thunder of avalanches on the slope of the dome above us, invisible among the clouds, our hearts sank, lest we should miss our chance a second time.

At length a fine day greeted us, on August 30th ; but it was Sunday, and in deference to the minister's wishes we did not climb, hoping that the spell was broken and we should now have a few days of clear weather.

The day was spent exploring past Berg Lake, getting magnificent views of Blue Glacier cascading down from the Helmet to end in the lake, or rather to be doubled up by reflection in that mirror, occasionally broken by a puff of wind. Beyond it there was another glacier descending from between the Helmet and Robson, and then came the series of falls and cascades into the valley where we had turned back the year before, some of these falls making a sheer leap of more than a hundred feet.

The river once made its way down in gentler fashion through an almost dry canyon to the north, which may have been dug before the great extension of ice in the glacial period, while the later course is so recent that the river has not had time to cut its way deep into the rock.

Robson itself, seen from the new angle, had

## At the Foot of Mount Robson

completely changed in shape. Instead of a somewhat irregular, flat-sided dome, it was a daring pyramid in the sky, with filmy clouds sweeping across, casting blue shadows on the pure white of the snow.

Monday morning dashed our hopes, for at dawn the top of Robson was once more wrapped in clouds, and on Tuesday morning the whole valley was roofed with vapours hanging so low as to hide all the mountain-tops, and sending down showers of fine rain.

To fill the time during these days of waiting I measured up the moraines, and fixed the distance between the end of the ice and a conspicuous boulder; while Mr. Kinney was more energetic, and, when the weather relaxed at all, climbed some of the nearer mountains or went in search of grouse, many of which fell to his unerring revolver. They were very tame little creatures, so that one could get within a few feet of them and hated to kill them, but they were delicious eating and saved our rapidly diminishing bacon.

My brother one day climbed Ptarmigan Mountain to have a look over that side of Mount Robson, but saw little through the clouds. He also explored the main glacier for two or three miles up, making the curious find of the bones of a lynx among some morainic debris on the ice. Why had the animal chosen that out-of-the-way desert of ice as a burial-place? We named the nearest mountain to the west Lynx Mountain, in his honour.



## The Canadian Rockies

John, when not cooking or looking after the horses, played with the bull terrier or took his gun in quest of goats, which never presented themselves, though he once saw a beaver at work near Lake Adolphus and was wicked enough to shoot at him, without success. A day or two before the horses were stampeded by this beaver slapping his tail on the water.

We were beginning to worry about the food question, and deliberately slept late and went to bed early so as to do with two meals a day; but our appetites, unfortunately, were never more vigorous than now in this cool mountain valley.

Almost always we were watching Mount Robson, or gazing at the clouds in his direction, sometimes catching a gleam of sunshine through the slanting raindrops, while blue gloom hid the mountains down the Grand Forks. At other times the top of Robson was caught by winds from the southwest, tumbling over its summit a grey cowl of flying clouds that hid the sun from us, but left the mountains to right and left more or less clear. Then there was often a brilliant rainbow spanning the Smoky Valley.

On the 3rd of September John announced that there were only one week's supplies left, and we held a council as to ways and means, to decide whether John should go on foot down the Grand Forks to Tête Jaune Cache or should take ponies and make a rush to Swift's. The latter seemed safest, and next morning I woke him at five and he was off with two ponies by seven, expecting

## At the Foot of Mount Robson

to go and come in about a week. It was now the tenth day of suspense for us, and we were growing disheartened.

During John's absence we had to do our own cooking, which helped to fill the hours of a miserably rainy day, while avalanches could be heard roaring down the mountain-side from time to time, since the rain below was snow aloft. When our climb did come, it would evidently be through deep, fresh snow.

Toward evening on the second day, when we were bestirring ourselves about supper inside the teepee, there was a blood-curdling shout, and we looked out to see John with the two ponies. He had found Adolphus and the half-breed party only a day's journey down the Moose valley, had stayed the night with them, and had brought three-quarters of fresh goat-meat and twenty pounds of dried and pounded meat, so that the food problem was solved.

The fresh meat was put in cold storage in a crevasse at the end of the glacier, and henceforth we lived mainly on the flesh of the mountain goat, rather strong-flavoured but nourishing enough.

## CHAPTER XXXVII

### OUR FIRST CLIMB

NEXT morning, the 5th of September, the top of Robson was cloudless at 3.30, and fantastic streamers of aurora danced behind it against a clear, starry sky. I rubbed my sleepy eyes, and woke to the fact that for the first time there was a chance of climbing. Soon the others were roused, while I lighted a fire in the middle of the teepee, and all made haste to get ready. Yates warmed up the goat-meat stew and presently had the pot of tea boiling, and we ate breakfast with the dull appetite of four o'clock in the morning. Some grouse that Mr. Kinney had shot a few days before had been cooked, and kept on ice, so that a lunch was all ready. Each took a grouse and a bannock and a bottle of tea in his sack, and as soon as it was light enough we began the stiff climb up the front of the glacier, winding and scrambling along ice-ridges separated by deep crevasses. The three principals had ice-axes, and John Yates, who was eager to come with us for a first experience of the ice, had made himself an alpenstock on Sunday out of a pole and a heavy wire nail.

## Our First Climb

The work at the lower end of the glacier was tedious but not difficult, and above us the top of Robson was delightfully rosy with the dawn, a little fleecy cloud clinging to it. Our chance had come, and we were in good spirits as we followed the crooked route among the crevasses picked out during earlier exploring trips. Then the great purple bulk of the Rearguard rose to the right, a massive outlier that hid the main mountain. We were now on the medial moraine with good walking, and in less than two hours had passed the Rearguard and once more looked up at the great peak of Robson, white with early sunshine. At a bold tower of rock, which had been nicknamed the Extinguisher, the glacier widens out and bends nearly at a right angle towards the main peak. Here it has a rapid fall, and is cut by long crevasses mostly too wide to jump, so that the distance to the head of the glacier was quite doubled. The main glacier ends at the foot of the steepest mountain slope, where it is fed by falls of snow and ice from above.

Up to this the ice had been nearly bare and made fair going, yet the four miles of glacier had cost us the morning, and at about noon we stopped to lunch in full view of cliffs topped with magnificent hanging glaciers, from which tremendous ice-falls thundered down under the strong sunshine. They looked like short-lived waterfalls, and as we munched our grouse and bannock with chocolate for dessert, our feelings were not of the pleasantest, for huge trains of ice-blocks kept rushing farther

## The Canadian Rockies

and farther out on the tumbled surface of the main glacier, threatening to cut off the route we had planned to follow.

After lunch we crossed the wide avalanche path, bending away from the cliffs to get beyond the range of the rolling blocks; and then began the stiffest part of the climb, on a slope of snow and ice with an angle of more than  $50^{\circ}$ . This led up to a broad bastion with a dome-like surface of ice, from which no hanging glaciers threatened to send down avalanches, and from the foot of the Extinguisher we had chosen it as the safest route.

Mr. Kinney, my brother, and Yates took turns in kicking in steps as long as the snow was suitable, but soon it formed only a film over ice, and then steps had to be cut. A recently sprained knee kept me from joining in this work, so that my ice-axe went to Yates, and I had to be content with his rough alpenstock, which could scarcely be stuck into the ice at all.

Yates suffered from cold feet, for his boots were never meant for climbing, and the hobnails he had put into the thin soles reached right through the leather and conducted away the warmth of his feet. Altogether, he was very badly equipped for the ice, which was getting so steep that it was hard work for the second man in the row to spell the first, since side steps had to be cut to let him past. Poor Yates's sensations during this first experience on steep ice could not have been enviable, but he was too plucky to show any discomfort, and he was so powerful with the ice-axe,



## Our First Climb

once he had learned to use it, that the other two were glad to have him take his turn.

At length we drew near the low, grey cliffs that ended the slope, where from below we had hoped to find a reasonably good bit of rock-climbing; but from our present footholds on the steep ice-slope this obstacle looked far more formidable than we had expected.

Our step-cutting had been slow, with arms unaccustomed to the work; and it was now getting on in the afternoon and we were only at 10,300 feet, with 3,400 feet of even more difficult climbing before us. Cutting somewhat deeper footholds than usual, we halted for a second lunch, finishing the grouse and chocolate; and Yates was a good deal worried to find his feet completely benumbed with the cold. It seemed risky to try the treacherous-looking chimneys in the cliff above, and since reaching the top of the mountain at that hour was hopeless, it was decided to turn back after photographing the slopes beside us and the Ptarmigan Mountains beyond the glacier in front. All of the more distant peaks were below our level, most of them probably not rising above nine thousand feet, though in this northern latitude they all bore snowfields and glaciers.

Clinging to our doubtful footholds, we were not in a mood to delay long at the highest point, and yet we could not help delighting in the marvellous view over the great glacier, the Helmet, the Rear-guard, the lovely lakes in the valley to the north, and white-robed Mount Resplendent rising prob-

## The Canadian Rockies

ably a thousand feet above us close by to the east, with numberless mountains in all directions beyond these nearer summits.

We began the descent face to face with the mountain, carefully feeling with the toes for the old steps cut in the ice ; but after some hundreds of feet of this ignominious work the slope became gentler, and we could turn our eyes toward the glacier below, and finally there was a glissade to the flatter part of the ice-sheet, where one could get up some speed in walking.

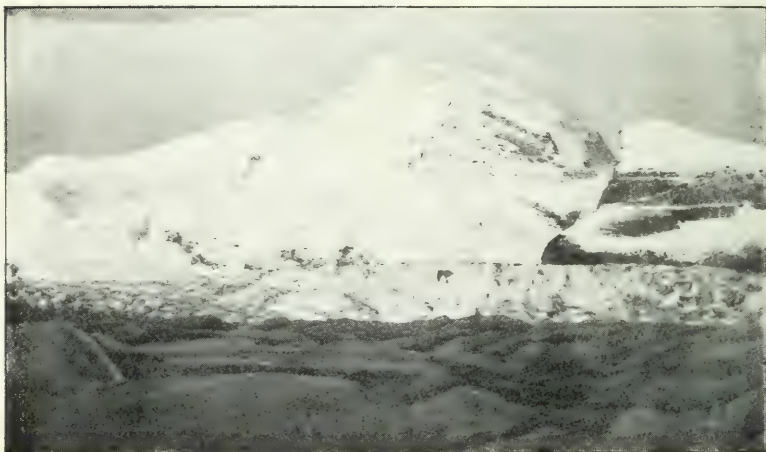
Coming up in the shadow and chill of the morning, the glacier had been silent and dead, bound by the frost of the night ; but now, towards evening of a warm day, all was gay and full of life—rills leaping and tinkling on all sides, joining to make brooks of crystalline water, often too wide to leap. Here and there these streams had cut their way down into ice canyons by no means easy to cross, and in one place we halted to see such a stream plunge with hollow reverberations into a “mill,” disappearing into mysterious blue depths. The hollow funnel of ice round this natural penstock was of contorted blue and white ice, like delicately veined marble. This was, no doubt, one of the sources of the subglacial river flowing over the rocks near our camp.

We could not halt long to admire it, for we did not care to negotiate the narrow ice-ridges between the crevasses after dark, so we pushed on to the steep end of the glacier, reaching our snug camp among the trees in the dusk after thirteen hours on





CAMP AMONG LAST BUSHES, 7,000 FEET.



MOUNT ROBSON FROM THE NORTH-EAST, AT 7,000 FEET.

## Our First Climb

ice and snow. Hoodoo had never been left alone so long before, and was overwhelming in his welcome of Yates, his lord and master.

Over the supper, in the warm, fire-lighted teepee, our spirits revived after the disappointment of our failure, and we concluded that with what we had learned the next attempt must surely be a success. The minister even joked Yates half-heartedly about his "cold feet," a term of somewhat unflattering significance in the west. It was not surprising that Yates, the plainsman, who knew everything about a horse but nothing about a glacier, except that it was made of ice, did not care to join us a second time. With his thin boots and crude alpenstock, very few trained mountaineers would have cared to attack Mount Robson.

Next day was Sunday, and we basked in the sun and rested, meantime laying plans for our next climb, cheered by the belief that the weather had really changed, for the snowy top of Robson gleamed in the sunshine like burnished silver. Not even the fact that we were now on short allowance of everything except rank old goat-meat dashed our spirits.

Towards evening, after we were well rested, we loaded up with blankets and supplies and once more trudged up the glacier, this time very cautiously, since our rather heavy loads made balancing on ice-ridges with a blue crevasse on each side more troublesome. As darkness settled down we reached the last bit of moraine uncovered by snow, two miles up the glacier and near the



## The Canadian Rockies

point where it bends towards the north. The only spot bare of snow and ice beyond this, as we had noted on the day of our climb, was a few hundred yards onwards, near the foot of the steep cliffs of the Extinguisher, and there angular rocks gave poor materials for a bed. While I set to work levelling the surface for our blankets in a sheltered nook of the moraine, the others scrambled over to an older moraine on the flanks of Lynx Mountain to gather some dead wood where the last bushes were fighting for their lives. Soon a fire was blazing, giving light to finish making the bed ; and not long after we were wrapped in our blankets, looking across toward the pallid face of Mount Robson, on which the moon was shining. About us everything was submerged in darkness by the shadow of the Lynx behind us, so that the moonlit hanging glaciers and the snow dome rose above the dark glacier at our feet like a lovely vision outlined against a nearly black sky sprinkled with stars.

It was comforting to think that two hours of tedious glacier work and 1,400 feet of ascent above our main camp would be saved in the morning, no insignificant gain in the shortening September days.

A brilliant day, followed by a brilliant night, sent us to sleep in good-humour, with hopes of fine climbing in the morning.

Some time before morning, however, I woke up uneasily and pulled the blankets over my head, and my bedfellows stirred in the same way half-unconsciously, for a bitterly cold breeze had sprung

## Our First Climb

up. Then drops began to fall, and we looked out on a troubled, stormy sky, and adjusted the tarpaulin to keep the blankets dry, hoping it would be only a passing shower. The few drops swelled to a downpour, with flashes of lightning followed by thunder reverberating among the mountains, and soon everything became soaked, including the soil and the blankets under us.

There was a wan, grey light at five o'clock, and the rain had ceased, so we lit a puny fire with a few sticks of wood left and made our breakfast of goat-meat, bread, and tea, which, though sugarless, was most comforting; but after a lull heavy rain began again, and the mountains were hidden.

There was nothing to do but pack up our belongings and go home over the slippery hummocks of the glacier, our loads doubled in weight by the soaking of the blankets; and by half-past eight our wet garments were hanging to the poles of the teepee, while we were crouching underneath round a hot fire.

For the rest of the day showers of heavy rain, driven by a fierce wind, alternated with streaks of pale sunshine, and at night there was heavy frost and snow, whitening the trees in the little grove behind us, while dry snow could be seen drifting on the glacier above. The flow of water ceased completely in the cave south of the camp, and I explored it for fully a hundred feet, under a roof of ice with a marvellous depth of blue.

Toward evening there were clearing skies, and

## The Canadian Rockies

we decided to make another attempt on Robson, trudging once more over the glacier with packs on our backs, balancing on ice-ridges, and leaping open crevasses where not too wide, but prodding carefully with our ice-axes where drifted snow might conceal a hidden opening, and finally clambering over the moraine where we had camped before to the last bushes on the mountain-side. We found the stunted things loaded with deep snow, but managed to clear off a sheltered space among them for our bed, which we feathered well with the stumpy little spruce-boughs. John had brought up a load of wood and the food, and after supper by an economical fire made his way down in the twilight, after which we gathered some more dead bushes for fuel, watched a rather threatening sunset sky of violet and gold behind the Lynx Mountains, and turned into a comfortable bed.

Some time during the night, however, the snow-storm began again, and when we got up, about five, hating to pull out of our blanket bags, a blizzard was raging along the mountain-side, threatening to bury our camp among the bushes.

Despondently we packed our bundles, without attempting to light a fire with the remaining twigs, and turned down the glacier, as we supposed for the last time, picking our course among the crevasses cautiously, with the gale hustling us from behind.

Lower down there was shelter from the wind, and at the main camp, where the snow was melting as fast as it fell, Hoodoo, the bull terrier, came out to welcome us, and we roused John from his



ON THE MAIN GLACIER IN A BLIZZARD.





## Our First Climb

slumbers to wash in the glacial stream before the door and get us a warm breakfast. Once more the teepee was encumbered with blankets hung from the poles to dry before a hot fire.

It was September 9th, and to all appearance our chance of reaching the top of Robson was over ; but Mr. Kinney, with immense pluck and a well-justified confidence in his powers as a climber, wanted to make one more effort, this time by a new route which he had been planning, attacking the mountain from the north-west side instead of the east, where we had met the difficulties of hanging glaciers. On the north-west there were no glaciers, and, so far as we had seen, very little snow, so that the climb would be mainly rockwork. My brother thought for a time of joining him, but the effort seemed so hopeless that he gave it up, and Mr. Kinney set out alone.

It seemed a foolhardy thing to do, but we knew that our friend was used to working alone and was at his best when depending on himself ; so we wished him good luck, but watched him disappear in the direction of Berg Lake without much hope that he would succeed.

He had to carry a rather heavy load consisting of blankets and food for two days, but expected to reach about nine thousand feet before night, where he would camp and go on to the summit in the morning. As his proposed camp ground was far above the highest bushes, he would have to do without fire, the climber's main comfort on a cold night.

## The Canadian Rockies

Next day John baked our last flour, eked out with remnants of oatmeal, into two bannocks, which must last us to Swift's, with the aid of plenty of goat-meat, while my brother and I began packing up in readiness to start for Edmonton as soon as Mr. Kinney came back.

He had expected to need two days for his climb, but late in the evening the plucky fellow turned up, soaked and defeated, though still in good spirits. He had a thrilling story to tell of his forlorn hope expedition. The climb over thousands of feet of rough talus, with here and there a cliff of rotten limestone, had cost more trouble than he had expected, so that night caught him at about seven thousand feet in a most inhospitable place, without a bush for fuel or shelter, or a moss or lichen to make his bed upon. He ate his cold supper, and then, wrapped in his blanket, snuggled down into a nook between blocks of slate, where he shivered through the night in a cold wind and was glad to uncoil his stiffened limbs on the coming of dawn. Breakfast without even a cup of hot tea was more miserable than supper. He now cached his blankets and most of the supplies and pushed toward the top in the lightest marching order, glad to get warmed up by hard work.

Of hard work he soon had a plenty, for near the head of the steepest slope his only chance was to wriggle up a chimney with loose blocks coming down upon him when touched. After this the corner was turned toward the Grand Forks valley, six thousand feet below him, and at one point he

## Our First Climb

passed under a projecting cliff from which immense icicles hung down between him and the abyss.

The usual snow-squalls struck him after rounding the edge of the pyramid above the deep valley, and progress upward could only be made by cautiously picking a way up snow couloirs between cliffs where loose blocks were ready to fall. The snow-squalls became fierce little tempests that nearly swept him from his footing and hid everything above, so that advance was impossible. Finally, in a howling blizzard at a point well above ten thousand feet as shown by aneroid, he decided that to go farther would be madness, and turned back, facing even worse risks, to his night camp among the slate blocks.

Though it was getting late and a drizzle made the rocks slippery, he would not spend another night there for any reason, and made his way down to the valley by a better route, reaching level ground before dark.

There are few men who would have run the risks alone which Mr. Kinney had braved in his splendid struggle for the top, and we were all greatly relieved to hear his voice come cheerily out of the darkness when he reached camp.

## CHAPTER XXXVIII

### OUR LAST CLIMB

AFTER Mr. Kinney's defeat all that was possible seemed to have been done, and we went to bed fully determined to start for the east next day ; but with the morning came the finest weather of the season, and we could not resist the temptation to make another assault on Mount Robson, which stood clear cut against the sky without a wreath of vapour, though the White Horn and the Lynx harboured a few clouds.

Once more we toiled up the glacier with packs on our shoulders to the high camp among the bushes, getting there in good time so as to gather a heap of gnarled sticks, small, but hundreds of years old, from the dead bushes near by. With these we made a comfortable fire, which was very welcome after the ruddy evening sunshine departed and a cold breeze swept up from the glacier.

We studied anxiously the face of the mountain opposite, so as to pick out the best possible route for the morrow, and decided not to follow our former course of a frontal attack on the great south-eastern spur of the mountain, but to turn up before







MR. KINNEY AND MR. L. Q. COLEMAN ON THE MAIN GLACIER.



NEAR THE "EXTINGUISHER," MAIN GLACIER.

## Our Last Climb

this along snow slopes which seemed to reach up between the hanging glaciers to about the same level. We should have to cross the hummocky surface of the ice avalanches for this, but all was absolutely quiet along their line of fall, and we hoped to pass the point of danger before the sun had done much work in the morning.

John had come along to help with the loads and stayed to supper, hot dried goat-stew with no bread, and only hot water to drink, because the tea had been forgotten. He left us with good wishes, and soon after the harvest moon began to gleam over the snows, and we got into our bags after levelling up the bed with some fresh boughs. It was a little windy, but a marvellous night, with everything steeped in a pearly light except the dirty glacier below us, dark grey in the shadow of our mountain-side, for the moon had risen behind us. Waking during the night, the wind had stilled and the moon was lower, but delicately coloured northern lights were darting and pulsing behind Mount Robson.

Our start in the morning was made at 4.50, almost before the dawn made it safe to venture on the glacier, and out of our grey gloom under the mountain shadows we looked up almost with awe toward the great snowy peak with its top tinged with heavenly rose, while a low moon hung in the blue-black sky to the west. Slowly the colour changed to orange and yellow and then to the white of day as the sun burst upon it. We had at last the perfect weather we had been waiting for, and

## The Canadian Rockies

struck out briskly over the rough main glacier toward the foot of the cliffs under the hanging glaciers, where we crossed to and fro to pass the many crevasses, and following nearly our old route, began to rise upon the surface of ice which had slid from above, now more or less covered with new snow.

There was unlooked for trouble in store, however, for tremendous avalanches of crushed ice had swept across since our last venture, leaving a broad track of loose blocks, large and small, ridged and piled into hills in some places, and in others ploughed clean to the smooth slopes of solid ice beneath.

We hurried across this chaos, though in the cool morning no avalanches were stirring. Then, at 7.45, began the steeper slopes, where we had to kick steps in crusty snow, and afterwards to cut steps in an icy surface under a thin sheet of partly frozen snow. Then came fifty feet or more of sheer ice at the foot of the hanging glacier we planned to climb, and under the warming sun the icicles from the top of the cliff began to drip upon us. My brother, our best axe-man, took the lead, steadily cutting steps up slopes so steep that every one had to keep himself constantly braced, but presently, getting round the dangerous corner of the cliff, there were steep snow slopes again, where one could kick in his toes for part of the ascent. Mr. Kinney then went ahead, doing the same kind of work, winding round snow-covered seracs and cutting steps up stiffer slopes till, after hours of work, we found ourselves completely tangled among

## Our Last Climb

huge ice-blocks fallen from the glacier, that now looked enormous as it towered just above us.

Among these vast blocks of blue ice separated by terrible crevasses we halted for lunch and to consider the situation. The sheer faces of ice above us were clearly impossible, and we gingerly made our way down for a hundred feet or two, and crossed a jumble of big and little blocks to the other side of an ice-ravine separating us from the next hanging glacier to the south. The snow was deep over the loose blocks in the ravine, and it was most uncomfortable to set your foot on a block and have it sink beneath you.

We halted again for a while in the wildest of surroundings, with cubes of blue-green ice a hundred feet in diameter, tilted at all angles, propped with smaller blocks, but apparently just ready to topple over, the fresh snow on the upper surfaces making the situation even more alarming, for it was loose and gave little support for the foot.

At last Mr. Kinney, with sharp eyes, picked out a practicable way across the ravine, going from one great block to another on snow bridges, sometimes narrow and with unattractive abysses to the right and left. On the other side the old work of kicking steps on stiff slopes of snow began again, helped out with much step-cutting where the angle was greater, and, fighting our way up against blinding showers of snow and ice particles hurled upon us by the wind, we reached at last the dome-like surface of *névé* for which we had aimed.

During the climb to this level we had cut steps



## The Canadian Rockies

up nearly one thousand feet, and had often been obliged to cut both hand-holds and foot-holds owing to the steepness, but we hoped now that the worst was over and that all might end well. It was now half-past three, and we had lost fully two hours struggling up on an *impasse* on the wrong side of the terrible ravine between the hanging glaciers. It was disgusting to have wasted so much time on this, our final chance for the top. Would a good Swiss guide have foreseen the difficulty and saved us all this hard and useless labour?

The *névé* dome on the south-east buttress rose gently, giving a welcome chance to catch one's breath, and soon we were on its summit, where a halt was made for a second lunch. We could look down over the gently curving surface toward the main glacier and our far-away camp ground among the last bushes at the foot of the Lynx, and we were higher than the Lynx itself and could see a great snowfield stretching beyond it to the east toward the valley of Moose River. The solid bulk of the Rearguard hid the grove at our main camp, but we could look over his head toward distant mountain ranges and see points perhaps fifty miles away toward the north.

The top of the Helmet, a striking point of rocks on the north flank of Robson, was a little above us, and Mount Resplendent rose a little higher still to the south-east beyond the white beginnings of a minor branch of the main glacier. The view could not be surpassed, but we could not delay after lunch was over, and turned hopefully away.



## Our Last Climb

toward the mountain itself, which towered nearly three thousand feet above us, but seemed to present no worse difficulties than we had already conquered.

The snow was fresh and deep and the slope grew steeper, making very heavy walking, but we got on well for half an hour, when all at once the *bergschrund*, where the glacier parted from the flank of Mount Robson, opened before us. Much of the chasm was hidden by fresh snow, and at first we expected to cross safely on a snow bridge; but a few prods with our ice-axes sent fifty feet of it into the depths, showing that the bridge was very unsafe. The *schrund* was ten feet wide and went to profound depths, so that our only hope was to get past its end somewhere. We soon saw that this meant a long and trying detour, with a considerable descent below our present level.

It was now nearly five o'clock, and in the shadow of the mountain it was freezing hard. In about two hours and a half it would be dark. Evidently to go on to the top would mean staying the night on the snow with no blankets and very little food or drink; for none of us would dare to go back over our thousand feet of steps in the dark. After Mr. Kinney's camp three thousand feet lower down on the opposite side of the mountain, where he shivered in spite of having a blanket and rock instead of snow for a bed, it was pretty certain that a night high up on Robson could mean nothing less than frozen limbs, so that idea was given up.

If Robson is ever scaled from the glacier side, it will probably be by a party equipped with sleep-

## The Canadian Rockies

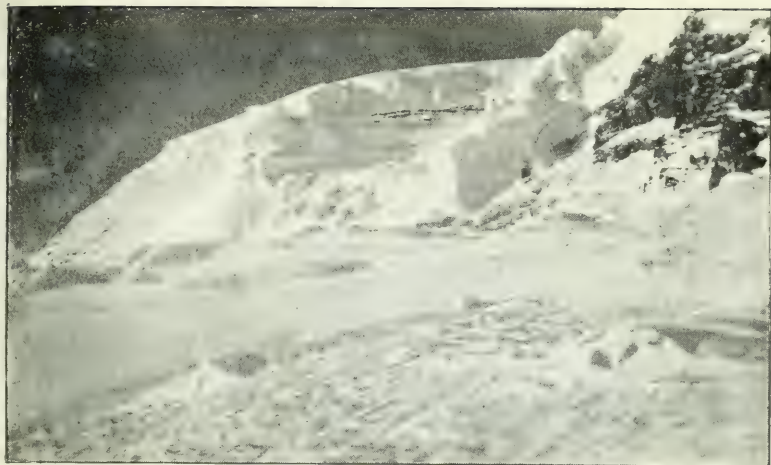
ing bags and a primus stove ; and these impedimenta will demand strong and skilful porters to carry them to the proper level.

The climb to the summit from the *bergschrund* no longer looked so easy as it had appeared from a distance. It would include some rock-climbing but also a large amount of step-cutting to pass small hanging glaciers, so that several hours might be needed to finish the work even from this point.

We were probably still at least two thousand feet below the top, since one aneroid read 11,300 feet and the other 11,600, while Mr. McEvoy's triangulation gives Mount Robson the height of 13,700 feet.

The game was up, and we must go back a second time defeated. We took a broad view across the sea of snowy mountains, all lower than ourselves, looked deep into the Fraser valley, but not deep enough to see its blue-green water, and then turned downwards.

The return was no child's play. Some glissading but much more ploughing through deep snow brought us to the edge of the ice-ravine, after which most of the descent to the surface of the main glacier meant the most careful choosing of steps, often face to the cliff, holding on with the hands and seeking the old foothold, now half filled with drifting snow, with the free foot. The rope was kept carefully at the right tension and each of us avoided a false step, for a slip would have swept us all three down a thousand feet, to land at last on the avalanche path. Occasionally the



HANGING GLACIERS, NORTH-EAST FLANK OF MOUNT ROBSON.



ICE AVALANCHE, NORTH-EAST SIDE OF MOUNT ROBSON.



## Our Last Climb

frozen drip from above had partly closed a step, when the lowest man had to open it up again with the pick, the recutting being much more difficult than the first cutting. It was the most risky bit of ice work any of us had done, and we were congratulating ourselves on being near the end when, turning the corner of the last ice-cliff, two avalanches in rapid succession swept down in front of us a hundred feet or so below.

After looking in vain for some other possible route, but always confronted by steep snow slopes ending in precipices, we unroped and made a dash across the quarter of a mile of broken ice, some of which had landed there only a few minutes before. There was an exciting race, stumbling over loose ice-blocks and slipping on smooth surfaces, before the track of the slides was past.

Beyond this there was no real danger, and we glissaded or plunged through the snow, now much softer than when we came up in the morning. On the main glacier much of the recent snow was water-soaked, making walking wretched, but providing a very welcome drink after the hot work we had just come through, for we had taken only one bottle of water with us and had long before this used every drop and acquired a monumental thirst.

Our camp among the bushes was reached at 7.40, with the dusk of a splendid evening settling down on mountain and glacier, and after nearly fifteen hours' steady hard work on snow and ice without once setting foot on rock, it was a relief



## The Canadian Rockies

to sink down on the turf among bushes, where we soon had a fire blazing while we ate the remnants of our lunch. We decided to stay the night here instead of stumbling for two miles through the darkness to our main camp, and turned in under the stars with no cheering spectacle of auroral streamers above the mountains which we had failed to conquer.

At five we were up, each stowing his blankets in his bag and arranging the load conveniently for the back before slipping among loose stones down the moraine and scrambling up among the ridges and crevasses of the main glacier. Two hours more of the ice and we were at camp, where John and his bull terrier sympathised with us on our failure and heated up the pot of rich "Mulligan" stew for breakfast.

After all, it was something to have traversed safely the wildest and most difficult slopes of ice and snow in Canada south of the Alaskan boundary, and we had at least escaped being swept with an avalanche into the abyss.

Twenty-one days had passed at or near our beautiful camp ground in the grove beside the main glacier, and in that time there had only twice been two fine days in succession. True to type, the clouds began to gather behind Robson the morning of our return, dimming the sun as we dismantled the teepee and arranged saddle, blankets, and packs for the journey, while John was after the ponies. We were tired after the heavy work of the day before and dejected over our defeat, and languidly

## Our Last Climb

wondered whether we should have made the top if there had not been new snow to our knees, or if we had not wasted two hours in the ice-ravine.

Speculation of that sort was futile, however ; and after a long wait John came across the flat, bare-back on his pony, whistling up the others, and the turmoil of saddling and packing a set of ponies wild and obstreperous from their long holiday soon drove such thoughts from our minds. The main object now was to reach Edmonton as soon as possible, for we were away behind our time, and had fully three hundred miles of trail to cover before reaching a railway train.

## CHAPTER XXXIX

### THE RETURN

A LAST glimpse of Mount Robson as we turned down the valley of Smoky River beyond Lake Adolphus showed its summit shrouded as usual with grey cloud, from which snow was driving aloft while spits of rain trailed into the valley. On our way home we followed the main branch of the river down to the Forks instead of striking across the intervening ridge, saving time by this longer route, so that we camped for the night near the spot where Adolphus had shot the goat. Here a sore disappointment awaited us. We had been living for some days on goat-meat with scarcely anything else, but John had been hoarding a little tapioca, a few dried peaches, and some sugar, intending to accomplish a triumphant tapioca pudding as a solace for our defeat. The ingredients were put together and the pot set over the fire, but something drew off John's attention and the pot burned. We ate the pudding, but it was not "a joy for ever."

On the evening of the second day we were near Fraser River, at the mouth of the Moose, and once more in the land of plenty, where blueberries coloured the hillsides and Mr. Kinney's unfailing



CLOUDS ABOUT MOUNT ROBSON.





## The Return

revolver provided chickens for the pot to join the pounded goat-meat of the "Mulligans," though, unfortunately, the salt was at an end, robbing the stews of their savour.

A rainy day's journey up the Fraser brought us to a white man's camp, where we got flour, baking-powder, and sugar enough for a day or two, when we hoped to reach Swift's, and henceforth to live in luxury.

On the 17th we arrived at the ranch and made all arrangements for a rapid journey out, getting supplies to last as far as the Big Eddy, and having two of our most footsore ponies shod on the front feet. Mrs. Swift was good enough to bake a stock of bread, and Swift dug us some potatoes, so that we fared sumptuously.

Once more in motion we found that a race was on, for a large party of halfbreeds were travelling in the same direction as ourselves—towards Lac Ste. Anne; and when we halted for lunch they swept past us, men, women and children, with fifty ponies, not to speak of colts and dogs, neighing, barking, jingling bells, shouting and laughing, all in the happiest excitement.

Toward evening, still behind them, we camped a little way off the trail near Fiddle Creek, at the edge of the mountains. Next morning's breakfast consisted of beans, pancakes, and syrup, the first meal devoid of goat-meat for more than three weeks, so that we once more felt ourselves civilised human beings, and quite enjoyed a canter past the half-breeds, who were busy and noisy, packing up.

## The Canadian Rockies

When the horses had been rounded up in the dewy grass at six o'clock there had been fifty miles of rosy mountains in sight, but rising autumn mists along the river hid them from view as we mounted and set our faces toward the great plains. Following a new trail to the Leavings of the McLeod, we found the meadows along the river as sear and the poplars almost as yellow as the year before; and on the second day, in pouring rain, we reached the Big Eddy, where the hospitable Frenchman took us into his store to avoid pitching the lodge on wet ground, and fed us on trout fresh from the water.

Next evening we discovered that civilisation had made a long march towards the mountains, for a railway construction camp, with smelly piles of empty tin cans behind the dirty tents, occupied a once lovely river valley, up which a long scar was being cut, followed by an ugly clay embankment. However, there were compensations, for we actually had supper in one of the tents where two clean-looking women served us with pork and beans and potatoes, with pie and stewed prunes for dessert; and afterwards we slept all four in a row on top of a hay-stack under the brilliant stars of a frosty night.

Near Lobstick Lake snow-squalls beset us on September 24th, making things wretched for a day or two, and at the crossing of Pembina River our friends the halfbreeds, who had passed us and been passed every day, went by once more, a picturesque troupe, Adair's wife, with her baby, bringing up

## The Return

the rear. From this point our ways diverged, and we saw them no more.

On September 26th, after a record journey of more than 250 miles of rough trail in eleven days, we reached the Hobo ranch and unpacked the ponies for the last time. Our troubles were not all over yet, however, for the only wagon we could get at Ste. Anne broke down on the way to Edmonton, and John had to make a new "reach" with his axe from a poplar beside the road.

At Edmonton we compared barometers at the observatory and soon after separated to the four quarters of Canada, my brother to his ranch at Morley, the minister to his charge in Victoria, and I to Toronto, while Yates went back to the Hobo, expecting to make at least one more trip with ponies to the Yellowhead before winter set in too severely.

After his first trial of climbing on the snow-slope of Mount Robson John lost his enthusiasm for that kind of work, partly because he had not the right equipment; but he was the most resourceful man with horses and in the general conduct of camp life in the wilderness imaginable: strong, courageous, and alert in all emergencies of a life made up of major or minor emergencies. His skill in packing a horse so as to avoid a sore back on a bad trail was only equalled by his versatility in turning dried goat-meat, smoked fish, desiccated potatoes, and odds and ends of rice, oatmeal, or bannocks into flavoursome "bouillon" or "Mulligan." The contents and consistency of the latter important dish were always to me a

## The Canadian Rockies

mystery, but I can testify that no matter what it contained, it sustained life. We were all experienced campers, but John could pitch camp, bake bread, and have a meal ready in fewer minutes than any of the rest of us when hunger was gnawing and a minute meant much. This helped to balance a habit of travelling till very late in the evening.

On our way east from Mount Robson we often talked over the best method of attack on a future occasion, agreeing that perhaps the route most promising of success was that taken by Mr. Kinney on his lonely climb up the talus slopes and rock cliffs toward the north-west; and before parting it was agreed with Yates that he should arrange for horses in the following summer if we should join in a third expedition to the unconquered. My brother and I expected to take part in this, but Mr. Kinney was able to get off earlier than we could, and learning that he was already on his way to Mount Robson our plan was given up.

## CHAPTER XL

### LATER ASCENTS OF MOUNT ROBSON

TWELVE months later it was announced that Mr. Kinney, with a young engineer named Donald Phillips, had reached the summit on August 13, 1909, after a long struggle and the greatest possible dangers, and it is worth while to add an outline of this remarkable exploit as described by themselves in the *Canadian Alpine Journal* for 1910.

Hearing that expeditions were on their way to Mount Robson early in the summer of 1909, and resolved if possible to forestall them, Mr. Kinney set out for Edmonton to arrange for the journey, but found that Yates, with whom he had hoped to travel, was otherwise engaged, so that he had to make his way along the trail unaided. However, the advance of the railway construction since the fall before made this less difficult than it might have been. On the way a young engineer named Donald Phillips, without experience in climbing, was induced to join Mr. Kinney in the exploit.

The pass between the Smoky and Grand Forks



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Rivers, where we had camped before, was reached toward the end of July, and on the 26th they began their first attempt on Mount Robson, climbing up the north shoulder of the mountain and following much the same route as that chosen by Mr. Kinney on his lonely ascent the year before. Edging round toward the north-west, they camped at 9,500 feet, and in the morning passed to the west side, where they could look down on the deep valley of the Grand Forks below its falls and also on Lake Kinney. Their way upward was largely on the hard snow of a couloir; but at eleven thousand feet the bad weather so common on Mount Robson forced them to halt, and they decided to go down. After a very rough and difficult descent the foot of the mountain was reached just before dark.

A second attempt was made two days later, reaching about the same elevation, but once more they came back unsuccessful. There was now a long delay caused by bad weather, the more annoying because supplies were running low, and it was August 9th before another climb could be made. On that day the packs were carried up to nearly ten thousand feet, leaving only 3,700 for the final effort; but again hostile weather was too much for them, and they returned to the foot of the mountain, after battling with a snowstorm on the heights. This snowstorm lasted three days; and, as often happens on such expeditions, the food problem became very serious, though grouse and marmots served to stave off hunger.

## Later Ascents of Mount Robson

The circumstances were as discouraging as they well could be, but the plucky climbers promptly made another attempt as soon as the storm was over, on August 12th, this time reaching 10,500 feet with their heavy loads, which included some wood for fuel. High up on the inhospitable western shoulder of the mountain they chopped away snow and ice and made themselves a bed of stones, on which a wretched night was spent. In the morning within the shelter of a stretched blanket a little fire was kindled with the sticks carried up from timber-line thousands of feet below, so that they might have something warm to start with.

As usual, clouds gathered about them and snow began to fall, and they commenced the final ascent under most depressing conditions, scaling rampart after rampart formed by small transverse cliffs of rock on a slope averaging over  $60^{\circ}$ . Within five hundred feet of the top they encountered overhanging cornices of snow on the cliffs, making fresh difficulties, and the weather became more stormy, but they struggled on to the summit, which was reached in five hours after leaving their night camp at the 10,500-foot level. The actual summit, 13,700 feet above the sea, turned out to be a narrow ridge with a dangerous snow cornice, where the utmost care was necessary to avoid an accident, and where no cairn could be built. After indomitable efforts Mount Robson, the highest point of the Canadian Rockies, had been conquered, reward enough for all the hardships, even

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though the weather scarcely gave them a glimpse of the sea of mountains round them.

The return proved far more difficult than the ascent, for chinook weather had set in, the warm west wind raising the temperature and largely thawing away the steps cut in the snow on the way up; so that it took seven hours of the most careful work to reach the upper camp, after which they still had several thousand feet of rock-climbing. It was after dark before they were once more on level ground at the foot of the mountain. The famous mountain was conquered after the most exhausting work and the most serious of risks.

The side on which the only successful attempt on Mount Robson was made looks from the valley as if most if not all of the work would be on rock; but actually, as one may see from the foregoing summary of Mr. Kinney's narrative, there are important stretches of snow, especially in the couloirs of the upper part. There is apparently no actual glacier on that side of the mountain, making a very striking contrast with the opposite side, which is mostly covered with snowfields and glaciers. The type of mountaineering required on the two sides is as different as one could imagine.

Later in the summer a party of distinguished English climbers made their way to Mount Robson in search of interesting work, under the efficient guidance of Mr. John Yates, who had travelled with us the year before, and made their headquarters on our old camp ground among the trees near the foot of the main glacier. On their way in they

## Later Ascents of Mount Robson

met Mr. Kinney returning from his brilliant and successful climb; and as his work had been performed on the west flank of the mountain, they naturally made choice of the eastern side for their attempts.

Their most important climb was made by Messrs. Mumm, Amery, and Hastings, with Inderbinen as guide. Their route lay up the main glacier, much as ours had done, but they crossed somewhat farther north, and climbed the rocky side of the Helmet, thus avoiding the hanging glaciers which cost us so much time in step-cutting. Beyond the Helmet they ascended a glacier to the *bergschrund* separating it from the main flank of Mount Robson. This was crossed with more or less difficulty, skilfully overcome by Inderbinen, and some advance was made beyond it over a steep and troublesome slope. By this time it was evident that they could not reach the top and come down the same night, so, very reluctantly, they turned back. Soon after beginning the descent they were nearly swept away by a fall of ice, and later were caught in a thunderstorm, so that their adventures were not unlike our own.

From the account given by Mr. Mumm in the *Canadian Alpine Journal* and from a personal account given me by Mr. Hastings, it is probable that the party reached a point some hundreds of feet higher than we did.

It is reported that an attempt was made on Mount Robson in 1910 also, this time by Messrs. Mumm and Collie, but I have seen no account

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of their climb or its success. However, if the top had been reached, this would probably have been announced.

Thus far, omitting our quite abortive frontal attack in 1907, there have been four attempts on Mount Robson, the only successful one being that of Mr. Kinney and his companion, working on the north and west sides.

The completion of the Grand Trunk Pacific Railway will presently make Robson easy of access, however, and no doubt many climbers of skill and experience will try a fall with it ; but unless some new and much easier mode of attack is discovered, it will probably remain a difficult peak, comparable, perhaps, with the Matterhorn in the Alps.



## CHAPTER XLI

### ROBSON AS A MOUNTAIN

MOUNT ROBSON is not only supreme among the Canadian Rockies, rising more than one thousand feet higher than any of its competitors, but it has points that make it notable among mountains in general. Usually high mountains are surrounded and led up to by many neighbours and rivals not greatly lower, so that the full effect of height is lacking; but Robson rises head and shoulders above its surroundings, reaching at least 2,500 feet above the nearest peak, Mount Resplendent, and more than three thousand feet above any others. Moreover, it stands out boldly near the south-western edge of the Rockies, facing the deep valley occupied by British Columbia's greatest rivers, so that two miles of its stature rise with a slope of  $60^{\circ}$ , as determined by Mr. McEvoy, directly from this valley. Probably few mountains in the world can surpass this ascent of ten thousand feet within a mile from the base.

Seen from the Fraser valley, it is by far the vastest of the Rocky Mountain cathedrals, built of nearly horizontal courses, the lower one thousand

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feet of quartzite, the upper nine thousand feet of limestone—the lower two-thirds rising as walls too steep for snow to lie, while the upper third supports only a few small patches of permanent snow. The summit is unsymmetrical, the left half built up as a snowy pyramid, while the right sweeps gently down to a lower peak ; so that the whole effect is of a monstrous wall of masonry, heavily buttressed, with a ridged roof lifting itself to a pyramid toward the north-west.

In the Grand Forks valley at the foot of the mountain the portentous wall cuts off entirely the view of the summit ; but a few miles to the north, above the tremendous series of falls in which the river descends two thousand feet, one sees the mountain as an almost perfect pyramid, sloping about  $65^{\circ}$  toward the left and  $45^{\circ}$  toward the right, the summit ridge disappearing in the perspective. From this side the visible height is more than eight thousand feet, and the slopes are too steep to allow snow to lie in masses producing glaciers.

Looking up from the pass on the north side, however, between Berg Lake and Lake Adolphus, the summit takes the outline of a dome, largely snow-covered, and here three important glaciers reach the valley.

Travelling up the main glacier from the pass one gets the view from the north-east just opposite to that from the Grand Forks valley ; and at a point half-way up from sea-level there are still about seven thousand feet of the mountain in view, with a domelike part to the right, curving more

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gently down toward a minor peak to the left. On this side conditions are reversed as compared with the south-west. Except for some cliffs and dark horizontal outcrops of rock, the whole surface is covered with snow and hanging glaciers, discharging by avalanches to build up the main glacier, which extends between Mount Resplendent and the Rearguard, and then sweeps round to the north, ending at the pass between the lakes.

Combining the different aspects, one may think of Mount Robson as a gigantic wedge-shaped block, with its uneven edge rising ten thousand feet in the air as a vast wall of rock on the south-west; but with the north-east slope exposed for only seven thousand or eight thousand feet and mostly covered with snow and ice.

The bold front toward the south-west is cut off from the surrounding mountains by the deep valleys of the two branches of Grand Forks River, which clasp the peak on three sides and carry nine-tenths of its drainage to the Fraser River; while the other tenth, part of one of the streams draining the main glacier, flows north toward Peace River. There are three beautiful lakes connected with these rivers, two on the north-west and one on the south-west, all dammed by old moraines made during the Ice Age.

Why should this particular obelisk of rock raise its point so much higher into the clouds than its neighbours, all fine mountains but by no means lofty?

One is tempted to think of it as thrust up by

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some irresistible force from beneath, a sharp wedge driven upwards, perhaps, by repeated blows ; but a study of the geology proves the exact reverse, since instead of being lifted above its surroundings Robson is structurally the lowest point in the region, the bottom of a synclinal fold.

The flat courses of quartzite and limestone so conspicuous in the central mass of Mount Robson are gently curved upward toward the ends ; while in the mountains near by the beds are bent up on edge or even tilted backward like the front of a toboggan ; so that the present mountain was originally the bottom of a syncline or basin, where the rocks were compressed and strengthened by the thrust from the south which causes the folding.

The parts of the fold bent upwards, to the south and north, belonged, on the other hand, to anticlines, where the rocks were stretched and shattered in the folding process, and fell a prey to the wear and tear of frost and running water. They were more or less completely destroyed, leaving the solid central block as the highest point of the Rockies.

The peculiar position of Robson, rising so suddenly near the south-western edge of the Rockies, with the wide-open valley in front and only moderately high mountains between it and the Pacific, gives it a remarkable climate of its own. The Shuswaps who told Milton and Cheadle that "it had rarely been seen by human eyes, the summit being generally hidden by clouds," exaggerated, no doubt, but we can testify that for weeks at a time clouds may cover its top. The

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usual westerly winds, loaded with moisture from the Pacific, are forced up thousands of feet by the front of the mountain, thus expanding and cooling, and the suddenly condensed moisture falls as rain. Since the prevalent winds are from the west or south-west, the clouds formed at the summit are perpetually hurried eastwards, and most of the snow falls on that side of the mountain. During our twenty-one days' watch of Mount Robson from the north there were only two or three when there were no trailing wreaths of cloud clinging about its brow or sweeping across it in our direction. On every other day more or less snow fell on the upper slopes.

This almost perpetual cloud-cap sometimes completely hides the summit, but generally the veil comes and goes, thickens in one place and thins in another; sometimes quite transfused with sunshine and often gorgeously coloured in the early mornings, but less so in the evenings when seen from the north-east near the usual camp ground.

Looking up from the Fraser valley in the opposite direction, the clouds seem usually to be hurrying eastwards across the summit, and even on the clearest days a wisp of vapour gathers and clings in the deep ravine leading up from the two main buttresses toward the snowy pyramid on top. Once on a clear evening we saw this rise like a plume of flame against the ruddy alpine glow of the peak, a spectacle to remember.

Since there is a heavier rain and snow fall on Robson than on the lower ridges around, the Grand



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Forks, which drains most of it away, is a powerful river for its small drainage basin. Though not more than twelve or fifteen miles long, it is a fairly large river where it enters the Fraser, and the old maps make it head thirty miles north of its real source. The strong flow of water and the fall of about two thousand feet in a few miles make both branches of the river enclosing the front of Robson very active agents of erosion, accounting perhaps for the transport of the many cubic miles of rock which have been removed from these profound valleys cut at the base of immense cliffs.

The glaciers gnawing at the north-eastern face are sluggish workers compared with the roaring torrents attacking and devouring the frost-shattered rocks on the west and south-west. On all the cliffs Frost is active as a quarryman, and when the afternoon sun begins to shine on the ten thousand feet of rock wall facing the valley there are few half-hours when falls of thawed and loosened blocks cannot be seen and heard, and the huge blocks heaped at the foot of the cliffs are evidence of the successful warfare of frost and water on the flanks of the giant.

Mount Robson pays the penalty of greatness in the power and persistence of the attacks made upon it from all sides, but especially on the side where it rises most grandly; and there is something almost appalling in the relentlessness with which the river, borne on its own bosom, is tearing at its side and base. It is an unequal contest, with all the fury and all the success on one side.



BLUE GLACIER ABOVE BERG LAKE.



UPPER FALLS OF GRAND FORKS RIVER.



## Robson as a Mountain

With plenty of moisture and the mild Pacific climate, the bottom of the Grand Forks valley, where not swept by fire, shows a magnificent forest growth, mainly of spruce, tamarac (larch), giant cedar, and hemlock—trees often three feet or more in diameter and more than a hundred feet in height. Under this growth of ancient trees is a lower forest of shrubs, the devil's club being most in evidence ; and completely covering the rocky floor of the valley a thick sponge of moss and ferns holds the moisture. The luxuriance of the growth quite suggests the rank vegetation near the British Columbian coast.

This valley is about three thousand feet above the sea, and the warm, moist winds from the ocean have free access between the rather scattered and low mountains of the Gold and Coast ranges, bringing with them the mild, wet climate of the coast, though Grand Forks is three hundred miles from the nearest arm of the Pacific.

Only a few miles away, but 2,700 feet higher and at the rear of the mountain, the climate and vegetation are totally different, and the little grove, protected by a low wall of rock from the glacier, where our teepee was pitched, showed no hint of luxuriance. Stubby spruces and balsams rose to twenty-five or thirty feet, with a thickness seldom reaching a foot at the butt ; and their slow and meagre growth is shown by a dead tree cut for fuel, eight inches in diameter and with 240 annual rings of growth. The largest trees, a foot through at the base, must have toiled four or five

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centuries to reach that bulk, and then seem to have almost stood still, for the outer rings are too narrow to separate even with a lens.

The undergrowth is equally meagre, a few willows growing somewhat thriftily along the streams where they are well watered, but other bushy plants being straggly and poverty-stricken, while the mosses and lichens of the drier ground are thin and harsh, scarcely hiding the poor, stony soil. Only two kinds of berries occur, the crowberry (*Empetrum nigrum*), found everywhere in sub-Arctic climates, and a red-berry bearing plant, whose name I do not know, low-growing and taking on intense scarlet and crimson colours in September, found with grasses and sedges on the older moraines. The three members of the heather family growing in the Rockies are common (*Cassiope tetragonea*, with white bells; *Bryanthus empetrifomis*, with reddish flowers; and *B. glandulifera*, with yellowish-white blossoms).

The whole assemblage is that of a cool, somewhat dry region, in strong contrast to the rich and prosperous growths on the south-west side of the mountains.



## CHAPTER XLII

### SOME COMPARISONS

NONE of the mountains of North America can be measured against the Himalayas or the higher Andes in altitude, and to climbers familiar with these giant peaks the Canadian Rockies may seem quite insignificant; and yet some of the most famous workers among the Himalayas, the Andes, the Caucasus, and the Alps have later become so enamoured of the Rockies as to come back to them season after season. To draw experienced British climbers from the French or Swiss Alps, only a few hours' journey from home, to Banff or Laggan or Glacier five thousand miles away, implies rather potent charms.

Much the same is true of the skilful American climbers, who flock to Alberta or British Columbia instead of spending their summers a few hundred miles to the south among the mountains of Colorado, which are thousands of feet higher. Why should the Canadian Rockies prove more fascinating than Pike's Peak or Mount Whitney? It is evident that the cause is not to be found in altitude alone, for few of them rise above twelve thousand feet and none above 13,700.

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The beauty and attractiveness of mountains depend, of course, on various factors, of which absolute height is only one. Relative height above the surrounding plains or valleys counts for more, and permanent snowfields and glaciers are needed to give the true Alpine charm; and these may be found on peaks of only nine thousand feet among the Selkirks. They rise above valleys only two or three thousand feet above the sea, and their northern latitude and moister climate provide a heavy snowfall, so that they are crowned with fields of *névé* and glaciers.

On the other hand, the much higher mountains of Colorado rise from a plain seven thousand feet above the sea and have so feeble a snowfall that they are bare before the end of summer.

Except in the short extension of the Canadian Rockies into Washington and Montana, there are scarcely any glaciers to be found south of the international boundary. Even the noble row of extinct volcanoes running down through the Pacific States west of the Rocky Mountains, including Mount Baker, Mount Rainer, Mount Shasta, and others, bear only a few tiny glaciers, though their fine cones with snowy tops make impressive objects as seen from the comparatively low plains.

This is still more true of the lofty Mexican volcanoes, the *Nevados*, or snow-tipped peaks; for even Popocatepetl and Orizaba, reaching eighteen thousand feet in height, are without glaciers, though they are capped by two or three thousand feet of snow. In a climb of Orizaba some years

## Some Comparisons

ago I looked out carefully for accumulations of ice, but saw none even in depressions between the ancient lava streams, though the last 2,500 feet of the ascent was on snow, down which we had a famous glissade.

The dryness of the air and the strong and more nearly vertical sun of summer prevent the formation of glaciers on most of the high American mountains and on all those of Mexico, robbing them of the most thrilling and seductive features of Alpine peaks, the gleam of snow, the blue of crevassed glacier tongues, the wildly-heaped moraines, and the white glacial torrents in flood on a sunny afternoon.

With the snow-line at nine thousand feet in the south-eastern part of the Canadian Rockies, and sinking in the Selkirks to 7,500 feet and even to 6,000 feet 150 miles to the north, snow-fields and glaciers are everywhere in evidence. From a single summit I have counted fifty glaciers. Most of them are small cliff or cirque glaciers, but there are a few *névé* fields reaching fifty or a hundred square miles in area and sending ice-tongues down into several valleys.

Only about 250 miles of the southern Canadian mountains have been at all explored, yet the glaciers observed already run into the hundreds. In the whole Cordilleran region of Canada there are probably more glaciers than in any other continent in the world.

From what has been said the reason is evident why any North American who wishes to use an

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ice-axe and glacier-rope must come to the Canadian Rockies. It must not be thought, however, that the Rockies are the highest mountains in Canada, for this is by no means the case.

Far to the north and west of the region described in this book there is a smaller but much loftier range along the boundary between the Yukon territory of Canada and Alaska. The range has no very fixed name, though in position it belongs to the Coast Ranges of the Pacific.

Fine snowy mountains, evidently high, may be seen from the ocean whenever the fogs lift and the clouds break near the upper end of the "panhandle" of Alaska. The highest of these, Mount St. Elias, was once wrongfully accused of being a volcano, apparently because of its shape and the tuft of clouds commonly drifting from its summit. Almost its whole eighteen thousand feet of height is snow-covered, except on cliffs too steep for snow to lie; and to climb it the Prince of Abruzzi had to organise an Arctic expedition, travelling with sledges. Sella's marvellous photographs give an excellent idea of it.

Mount St. Elias is the corner-post of the international boundary between Alaska and Yukon territory, and its summit may be claimed by both nations. Several of its neighbours, such as Mount Fairweather, are also notable mountains, rising almost directly from the sea to elevations of twelve thousand feet or more.

While Mount St. Elias has long been known, it has only been discovered comparatively recently

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that there are still higher points in its rear. Some distance inland Mount Logan was sighted by American engineers, whose triangulation gives it an altitude of over nineteen thousand feet. It stands a few miles east of the boundary, and is therefore in Canada, of which it is probably the loftiest point. The slopes near its foot have been visited by members of the Canadian Geological Survey, but no attempt has been made to climb it. For this purpose a well-equipped and costly expedition would be necessary.

For some time Mount Logan was looked on as the highest summit in North America, surpassing its rivals, Mounts St. Elias and Orizaba, by fully a thousand feet; but it was dethroned in turn by the boundary engineers, who later triangulated a point on the Alaskan side of the boundary with a height of over twenty thousand feet. This was named Mount McKinley. Several attempts have been made to ascend it, one of which was widely exploited.

A recent report, which some already contradict, shifts the honour of owning the highest peak in North America to Canada once more, since one of the boundary surveyors is said to have triangulated a summit in the Yukon territory reaching twenty-two thousand feet.

From the outline just given it will be seen that the sub-Arctic regions of North America contain giants far surpassing any peaks of the southern Rockies, and that some of them are still unconquered; but they are too distant, too difficult of



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access, too snowy, and too severe in their climatic conditions to become serious rivals of the Rockies as mountain playgrounds. They are immense—tremendous—but lack relief and contrast. They are too forbidding to attract the climber except to perform a strenuous feat and then escape to more cheerful climates. In spite of their much lower stature the Rockies will doubtless hold their own against them, at least for many years to come.

It goes without saying that the Rockies have been compared many a time with the Alps, for most of the experienced climbers who visit them got their training in that efficient school. The opinions of Old World mountaineers have varied widely, some, after a few days among the easily reached summits along the railway, adopting a lofty and condescending tone toward them; while others, going farther afield, have found in them charms quite equal to those of the Alps and have written enthusiastically about them.

It must be admitted immediately that the human and social attractions of the Alps are lacking. Whoever desires picturesque chalets on the mountain-sides and convenient hotels in every valley with a table d'hôte dinner in the evening should not come to the Rockies, though there are a few comfortable hotels along the railway. There are no well-built roads nor carefully-made paths, except in the park at Banff, and no jodelers to raise the echoes at suitable points, nor herds of cows with musical bells on the high meadows.

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At most in the way of human interest one may look down from a pass or peak and see in some lonely valley the lodge of an Indian family with blue smoke curling from the blackened top of the canvas cone, or may meet a jolly cavalcade of Mountain Stonies on the way to their hunting-grounds.

From the physical geographer's point of view, every feature of the Alps has its counterpart somewhere in the Rockies; folds and faults and tilted strata are carved into an infinitude of shapes, including risky peaks and aiguilles; snow and ice are present in every form, smooth and easy or torn with blue crevasses and splintered into daring seracs. There is every variety of stream at work, clear or muddy, gentle or furious, including much larger rivers in much longer valleys than any in the Alps. Small lakes are far more numerous and beautiful. Every element of interest and beauty on the physical side is as well developed somewhere in the Rockies as it is in the Alps; but from my own observation I may suggest that often the Alpine mountain group is better posed, the picture better composed from the point of view of the beholder, than in the Rockies. The reason for this is, I believe, largely one of area. The comparatively small mass of the Alps is more statuesque and more easily seen from the proper point of view than any part of the Cordilleran region, which sprawls over a hundred thousand square miles. This seeming lack of focus and concentration at dramatic points seems to me the

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greatest defect of the Rockies as compared with the Alps.

On the other hand, there is a cleanness and virginity, an exquisite loneliness, about many of the Rocky Mountain peaks and valleys that has a peculiar charm. There is the feeling of having made a new discovery, of having caught Nature unawares at her work of creation, as one turns off from a scarcely-beaten route into one never trodden at all by the feet of white men; and this experience may be had in a thousand valleys among the Rockies.

Climbing began there less than three decades ago, and it is only within about a hundred miles of the Canadian Pacific Railway that Swiss or Austrian or Italian guides have been at work. Within that belt most mountains have been climbed and most passes crossed; but farther north, and perhaps also farther south, there are hundreds of untouched peaks, and every climb may open out new valleys and new prospects.

To my mind much of the attraction of the Rockies and Selkirks lies in this sense of the freshness of everything. Each ride or tramp or climb promises to open out the unknown, the unvisited, the unmapped; while in the Alps all is ancient, cared for, and has long ago been tramped over by human feet and toiled over by human hands. There is nothing unexpected but the weather, and that has been blessed or cursed in the same words by dozens of travellers before.

As to climbs, my experience in the Alps has





MOUNT ROBSON FROM THE NORTH.



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been too small to give the right to an opinion, but Stuttfield and Collie,<sup>1</sup> who have had wide experience of both, say: "Mount Forbes and a few other high peaks will always afford magnificent climbs, and excellent rock-scrambling can be enjoyed on a host of minor summits; but the majority of the loftier mountains will not test the skill of the modern Alpine gymnasts very severely." While this may be true of parts of the Rockies, it appears that the writers at that time had not made the acquaintance of some of our more difficult peaks, such as Assiniboine, often compared with the Matterhorn, and Mount Robson. It is doubtful if any peak in the Alps presents more difficulties than Robson, if one may judge by the ill success of all the parties except one which have attempted its ascent.

Thus far only the southern Rockies have been run over, and that largely with a view to exploration rather than climbing, while the Selkirks have been even less studied. It will be many years yet before we shall know enough of our mountains to compare them fairly with Europe's playground, the Alps.

It may be worth while to give Stuttfield and Collie's estimate of the relative attractions of the two mountain regions. Speaking of the Rockies, they say: "On the other hand, they have a remarkable individuality and character, in addition to special beauties of their own which Switzerland

<sup>1</sup> "Climbs and Explorations in the Canadian Rockies," pp. 319-21.

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cannot rival." Going on to describe the landscapes in the valleys, they refer to the magnificent forests with their tangle of vegetation, and above all "the size, number, and exquisite colouring of the mountain lakes—in these things the new Switzerland stands pre-eminent."

Enough has been said to show that the western Canadian mountains differ in many ways from the well-known and well-beloved Alps, especially in their vast area ; but that in essential charm and interest, after balancing special defects and special advantages, the Rockies do not fall behind the Alps, while they far surpass in attractiveness any other mountain regions of America.

How lofty the peaks are in the immense stretch of mountains to the north little is known. There may be rivals to Mount Robson in height and difficulty ; and in any case the sinking of the snow-line toward the north and west will insure great snowfields and glaciers. For the ordinary mountain climber, however, the area already opened up, or soon to be opened up, by new railways still provides ample scope.

## CHAPTER XLIII

### THE BUILDING OF THE ROCKIES

THE Canadian Rocky Mountains, though not one of the highest, are one of the longest and most continuous chains in the world. Using the name in its most restricted sense, they begin a little south of the boundary in Montana, have a width of sixty miles or more between British Columbia and the plains of Alberta, and maintain this width for four or five hundred miles to the north-west, beyond which they are narrower and lower. They are still a distinct range of mountains in the Yukon territory, and do not finally disappear until they reach the Arctic Ocean west of Mackenzie River, so that the total length is not less than 1,600 or 1,700 miles. Throughout this whole length they seem to preserve the same character and to be of the same age, so far as our limited knowledge of the northern parts extends. Their life history is moderately well known in the southern parts.

The building of a great chain of mountains is an enterprise not to be entered upon lightly, since it requires long and laborious preparation by methods that are strange and mysterious, but that

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seem to be absolutely necessary. The operation begins by forming a long, shallow trough of the sea of appropriate width, stretching for one or two thousand miles beside a fairly lofty continent or between two continents. Into this trough rivers, waves, and tides transport and spread out thousands of cubic miles of sediments, which never fill it up, for the hollow floor of the trough slowly settles down as the sediments accumulate. Sometimes coarse wave-worn fragments of hard rocks, such as quartz, are spread out rapidly, at others sand is deposited far and wide in the trough, and alternately with them the rivers bring down volumes of mud that are widely distributed. Along the shore and in the deeper parts of the trough shellfish of all kinds, corals, stone lilies, and many other animals live and die, leaving their hard parts in the beds of ooze.

In the case of the Rockies this vast preparatory laying down of rock began at a very remote age, in the Cambrian, many millions of years before the mountains were to be built, and the process went on through the long ages of the Silurian, the Devonian, and the Carboniferous—that is, through the whole of the Palæozoic.

Thus immense quantities of gravel, sand, mud, and shells have been laid down and transformed into sheets of conglomerate, quartzite, slate, and limestone, the whole more than twenty thousand feet in thickness; and throughout this period of preparation the trough had remained a shallow sea, which had engulfed all the thousands of cubic miles

## The Building of the Rockies

of material stolen from the land without ever being filled to the brim. It was all done in a slow, desultory way that seemed to have no very definite object. It took large slices of adjoining mountain ranges to supply the materials, and the older mountains, such as the Gold Ranges, must have been greatly humbled thereby, while possibly other nameless ranges on the continent to the north-east were worn down to stumps and lost to sight completely in the process, for mountains are the raw material out of which mountains are built.

After the work of Palæozoic times events are less certain. In most parts of the region little seems to have been accomplished in the earlier divisions of the Mesozoic; but in the latest, the cretaceous or chalk period, the trough seems to have been filled, for the region had largely become swamps where great forests grew, supplying the thick sheets of plant tissues now turned into coal in many of the mountain valleys. The later rocks, shales, and sandstones with coal seams never got thoroughly solidified like the older beds, and so have been preserved only as remnants in sheltered places.

The preparation was now complete, after untold millions of years, and at the end of the Mesozoic the actual building began.

The final cause of the uplifting of mountains seems to be the shrinkage of the earth's interior, by loss of heat or in some other way, to which the solid crust has to accommodate itself. The accommodation takes place along lines of weakness, such



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as the great trough, or geosyncline, just described, stretching from Montana to the mouth of the Mackenzie, where the rocks of the earth's crust were bent down under the enormous load of sediments into deeper, hotter levels, and thus lost their old strength. They became plastic and yielded more easily than parts of the crust not so loaded, and in the collapse great segments of the crust were pushed against other segments by an irresistible thrust inland from the floor of the Pacific. The Coast Range and the Selkirks, long ago pushed up and consolidated, drove before them this softened, plastic belt of former sea bottom, crumpling, crushing, folding the rocks and piling them up in confused windrows, 1,600 miles long, sixty miles wide, and several miles high. We must not conceive of this *débâcle* as the result of one overwhelming push, however. The thrust was probably of a few feet at a time, but renewed for many thousands of years, each time causing the earth to shudder in an earthquake, until the great work was accomplished and a new mountain range was elevated parallel to the old ones which fenced the continent from the Pacific.

At the completion of the work the Rocky Mountains were perhaps as lofty as the Andes or Himalayas, for the tooth of time has been devouring their summits during all the millions of years between the Eocene and the present, so their full stature must have been diminished by thousands of feet.

The evidence for all these things is, of course,

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to be found in the mountains themselves. Along the line of Bow Pass it has been somewhat fully worked out by Mr. McConnell of the Canadian Geological Survey,<sup>1</sup> who finds the western part squeezed into folds, while the eastern has been broken into six long blocks, each tipped up toward the east and riding upon its neighbour, thus forming the "writing-desk" mountains so common between Bow River and the Brazeau.

McConnell estimates that the easternmost range was pushed seven miles out over the prairie, and that the whole series of blocks mean an overriding of twenty-five miles. If they could be slipped back into their places and the surface smoothed out again, what now covers twenty-five miles in width would then measure fifty. How much slack has been taken up in the folds of the western side he does not estimate.

The structures he has described are in general broad and simple—far simpler, for instance, than those extraordinary and complex overturned folds of the Alps recently worked out by French and Swiss geologists; so that the southern Rockies make a good starting-point for a beginner in the study of mountain forms.

The structures along the Saskatchewan and Brazeau are much like those of Bow Pass, but farther north, in the Athabasca valley, the load must have been heavier, so that the ancient strata could not break into blocks riding one on another. Instead they were bent into folds, broad and simple

<sup>1</sup> "Geological Survey of Canada," D. 1886.

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toward the centre of the range, but crumpled and overturned in the north-eastern ranges ; and many of the existing mountain-tops are synclines, like Mount Robson itself, but with more complicated structures.

The original tilted blocks and symmetrical or overturned folds were, of course, only the raw material out of which the present mountains have been carved, and the file and chisel are still busy in the shaping process, which will never be complete till the ranges are worn down to hills or a plain.

The Pacific side of the Rockies is being much more actively devoured than the side toward the plains, because of its more rapid slopes and heavier fall of snow and rain.

Whether the mountains are still rising so as to balance the destruction is doubtful. Dr. Dawson, one of the keenest students of the Rockies, believed that they had been elevated five thousand feet since the Ice Age, but the proof that they stood up to their waists in the Pacific so recently as that does not seem entirely convincing.

The Selkirks, however, much older than the Rockies and exposed to even more violent attacks, must have received an important hoist within the last few millions of years to make the fine showing they do.

It is rather surprising that the Rockies were elevated with so little volcanic activity. Lavas and ash rocks are entirely wanting except toward the south, though they are massively developed in the

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Gold Ranges west of the Selkirks. The only eruptives known in the Rockies are some bands of syenites containing the rare blue mineral sodalite near the valley of Ice River, south of the Canadian Pacific Railway, and some beds of volcanic ashes near the coalfields of the Crow's Nest region.





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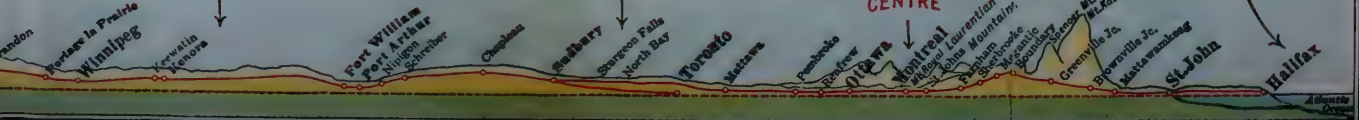




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